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Bach: The Historical Approach

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BACH

The Historical Approach

By

CHARLES SANFORD TERRY

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To

RICHARD ALDRICH

Note

THE essays here printed served, early this year, as lectures in New York and elsewhere in the United States and Canada. Their semipopular form, and occasional repetitions, are due to the fact that they were delivered to varied audiences, academic and general, and that no more than one of them was usually heard in each centre. Acceding to an invitation to give them wider currency, I employ a title which, though closely applicable to the first of them, generally indicates my standpoint in all. For the sake of its interest, and because I should like to put it on accessible record, I have added the solution of a genealogical problem.

C. S. T.

Westerton of Pitfodels,
Summer, 1930.

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The Historical Approach

I.

CHRONOLOGICAL exactitudes are generally misleading in measure as they are precise. Still, it is a tenable thesis that modern music begins with Bach and Handel. For of the Masters before the Vienna dispensation they alone speak a language we entirely comprehend. That they were born in the same year is one of History's happy coincidences; that they never met, one of Chance's most quippish pranks. Emerging together, they dominated a musical sphere not otherwise impressive. Gluck was under forty when Bach died, his highest achievement unfulfilled; Haydn was eighteen. When Handel followed his contemporary to the grave, Mozart was a child of three and Beethoven's birth was eleven years distant. So, the earlier half of the eighteenth century belongs to Bach and Handel. They shine with uncontested brilliance from a sky that holds no other suns.

It is a commonplace, that to comprehend a genius we must approach him through the circumstances that surrounded his birth. For, as Emerson remarked, the truest genius is "the most indebted man," or

colloquially, "Genius is one part inspiration, and three parts perspiration." Bach himself, when asked the secret of his mastership, replied simply, "I worked hard." The explanation is inadequate; but it is his career in eleven letters. Among the Masters of music he was, by circumstances and of his own volition, "the most indebted man." Compared with Handel's, his career was monastic in its seclusion, experimental in its habit. Before he was ten he was furtively copying compositions of the masters of the keyboard for his own instruction. Later, he transcribed the accessible scores of Palestrina, Caldara, Lotti, Vivaldi, and Legrenzi; and, of the French school, studied those of Couperin, Grigny, Dieupart, Raison, and Gaspard le Roux. England, too, came within the orbit of his curiosity. Indeed, there is little music from Palestrina onwards of which there are not copies in his industrious script. Handel, too, quarried, but with how different a purpose, appropriating themes his indolent Muse found it inconvenient to provide! But Bach, from our earliest introduction to him, confronts us as a student, almost demoniacally urged to unravel and discover the principles of his art. In no other of the Great Masters was this call so insistent, none who

faced such obstacles to answer it. He paid his adventurous visits to those giants of the North, Böhm and Reinken, while he was still in his teens. He was hardly settled in his first employment at Arnstadt before he took French leave, and risked dismissal, in order to receive lessons from Buxtehude at Lübeck. Even in the maturity of his genius the neighbourhood of a fellow-craftsman drew him always to seek his acquaintance, and haply his instruction. Twice, and vainly, he sought Handel's conversation. His famous Dresden encounter with Marchand is but an example of his eagerness to learn from any who had knowledge to impart. Unremitting study and self-criticism fashioned his individual style. Indeed, if the early neglect that obscured his memory was due in part to his failure to explore the art-forms then coming to birth, it was no less the result of meticulous self-discipline that refined his work beyond the comprehension of the generations that knew and followed him.

What, then, were the conditions out of which his genius emerged? Why did he express himself in the forms in which he is familiar to us? How comes it that, while Handel was fluent in Opera, Bach was careless, even contemptuous, of the Stage?

How is it that, unlike the other Masters of his period, we associate with him no new musical form? And why do we group him as the last portent of the old dispensation no less than the first of the new? These are questions which invite a historical retrospect, and to afford it is my chief purpose. Obviously I need to sketch broadly, but can do so, I hope, lucidly.

In the middle age of European civilization music was the handmaid, one might say the slave, of Religion. Hence its earliest expression was ecclesiastical plainsong, monodic, unisonal. But, at an early period it achieved a complex technique distinguished as polyphonic or contrapuntal, in which several melodies impose themselves on a fixed theme or *cantus*, in such a way that each voice—for the original art was vocal—adds a strand of accompanying melody to the main theme, parallel to it, consonant with it, and yet in itself complete and melodic. That it was practicable, and also agreeable, to sing two melodies together at a fixed interval, instead of one in unison or at the octave, was a discovery which sprang, we must believe, from circumstances rather than deliberate design. For men's voices, of which the medieval choir was composed, fall naturally

into two categories, Tenor and Bass, pitched roughly a fourth or fifth apart. Consequently a plainsong *cantus* low enough to suit the Basses might be inconvenient for the Tenors, while a melody fitted to the Tenors might soar too high for the Basses. Hence, perhaps in the ninth century, an "inspired precentor," a recent pen has called him, had the happy thought to invite his singers to recite the *cantus* at the convenient pitch of their individual voices, a cacophony in consecutives we probably should find it, but not disagreeable to the innovator, who, unknowingly, made the first approach towards the art of weaving simultaneous melodies into a coherent whole.

So, here was a primitive descant, the chief of the strands of complex polyphony. And, since dissonance resulted where before there was consonance, the new art was named *diaphonia* (dissonance), or *organum*, after the organized voice (*vox organalis*), which sang at the fourth or fifth, while the principal voice (*vox principalis*) declaimed the foundation melody or *cantus*. Thus was brought to birth the scheme of woven melody, of vocal polyphony, of which Bach's scores afford the supreme example. It is not convenient to trace its development in

the interval, from the tiny seed to the spacious tree. But its general course is clear. In time, by experiment or accident, other intervals, the third and sixth, were found as agreeable as the fourth and fifth on which to pitch the organized voice. Or, the organized and principal voices were duplicated at the octave, thereby producing *four* moving themes. But always their motions were parallel to the *cantus;* if the *cantus* rose or fell, the *vox organalis* did so sympathetically by a precisely similar interval. But eventually, after a further interval of experiment, the *cantus* ceased to put chains on the organized voices. Strict parallelism was abandoned, free motion was attempted, the *vox organalis* moving up when the *vox principalis* moved down, and *vice versa*, till at length composers were able to treat the *organum* as the vehicle of independent and agreeable melody.

But, even at this stage of its development, music was separated from Bach by a chasm we might suppose unbridgeable. For to him, as to us, it predicated the correlation of three complementary factors—melody, rhythm, harmony. In elementary form the first two are as ancient as man's earliest vocal sounds. But harmony is an almost recent ingredient. For the early poly-

phonists did not analyze music vertically, as we do. Their preference was to build horizontal or parallel melodies, capable of simultaneous utterance, linked rhythmically, exhibiting acoustic smoothness (i.e., harmony) at certain points or cadences of repose, but elsewhere displaying a lack of harmonic relevance which, to us, is disagreeable. Still, in the sixteenth century a closer approximation to our modern harmonic system was gradually achieved, until the polyphony of the Middle Ages found its highest expression in Palestrina, a Master unsurpassed by Bach himself in the noble sincerity of his art.

With Palestrina we enter a Golden Age, when musical culture was never so widespread, nor its votaries lit by a holier flame. Vocal polyphony began to move in melodious obedience to rules; and harmony, though still immature, became ordered and expressive. And yet, in their artistry, how immense an interval separates Palestrina's *Stabat Mater* from Bach's *Magnificat!* It could not astonish us if the space between them was measured in centuries. In fact, only ninety years, three generations, divide Palestrina's death in 1594 from Bach's birth in 1685. Thus, in the equipment Bach was familiar with, music reached him after a

surprisingly short period of incubation. For Palestrina was barely in sight of the forms Bach employed. Music was still obedient to the limitations of religious usage and tradition, though no longer exclusively ecclesiastical in its uses. It was sung *a cappella* and was exclusively vocal; it lacked instrumental accompaniment; it demanded a choir of singers, it ignored a solo voice; the vocal Aria was not invented; neither Organ nor Clavier had developed their technique, and the Orchestra was not yet constituted. Moreover, key-consciousness had not been attained, nor was the principle of measured time comprehended. These developments were revolutionary, and they were the achievement of the bustling ninety years that separate Palestrina from Bach, in broad terms, the seventeenth century, that age of turmoil and yet of swift progress. It invented new forms of musical expression. It set instrumental music on an independent course. Beginning in bondage to the old Modes, it ended by preferring the Ionian and the Aeolian—the keys of C major and A minor—and transposed them to various pitches to build our major and minor scales. A pulsing century of rapid, organized

growth, perfected and crowned by the absorptive genius of Bach!

The first and crucial advance along this path of high adventure was the so-called Monodic Revolution, conveniently synchronous with Palestrina's death. Its impulse was the intellectual stirring we call the Renaissance, that overpowering inclination of the individual to express himself, to look out on the universe from his own windows, and no longer through the spectacles tradition and authority had fixed on his nose. Thus impelled, and seeking to become the vehicle of individual emotion, Music demanded fresh modes of utterance, new forms in which to interpret the aspirations and accomplishments of the human mind. Concretely, the pioneers of the "New Music," as these sixteenth-century rebels against tradition styled it, asked that music should no longer decorate only the unemotional corporate worship of the Church Catholic, but should equip itself to interpret secular themes, no longer in the staid formulas of the ecclesiastical *cantus*, but in dramatic periods as naturally inflected as the tones of an actor. In a word, the individual, who so far had been submerged in the collective voice,

now claimed a medium appropriate to his self-expression.

But the distinction of Giovanni Bardi and his fellow-innovators is not so much that they introduced unisonous dramatic forms—the Recitative and Aria—as that they sponsored them in the Academies, in which till now polyphony alone was admitted and taught. So here is the convenient starting-point of modern music. Only six years after Palestrina's death, Jacopo Peri produced (1600) his *Euridice* at Florence, the first notable work of an operatic School which maintained its continuity, though not its monopoly, thenceforward till the era of Verdi and Puccini. And, with suggestive coincidence—for the two forms are scarcely distinguishable—the same year witnessed the Roman production of Emilio de' Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione di anima e di corpo*, with scenery, dresses, action and Recitative, closely similar to Peri's work in form and style. Thus in Italy modern Opera and modern Oratorio came to birth simultaneously. And in Italy Opera survived. But Oratorio, deserting the land of its origin, fared northward, and eventually mated with the genius of Bach.

Meanwhile, the potentialities

of instrumental music were not overlooked by the revolutionary Florentines—indeed the word *Sonata*, signifying music mechanically sounded, came into simultaneous vogue with *Cantata*, the New Music sung by the human voice. Monteverdi (d. 1643) boldly employed every instrumental resource at his disposal to elaborate his operatic scheme, and for purely instrumental effects. So, the Orchestra discovered an independent rôle. And conveniently and coincidently, superseding the antique Viols, the Violin family presented it with its most cherished and effective member.

Probably few of us realize how recent was the vogue of the Violin in Bach's lifetime. It is not found in a music Score before 1587. Andrea Amati, who first gave it a form distinguished from the treble Viol, died (*c.* 1580) a century before Bach's birth. But Antonio Stradivari, the greatest of the Cremona makers, was his contemporary and predeceased him (d. 1737) by only thirteen years. Giovanni Battista Vitali, the earliest master of Violin Sonata form, died (1692) when Bach was a schoolboy at Eisenach. Giuseppe Torelli (d. 1708), whose *Concerti grossi* established the features Bach himself accepted, published (1709) them actually

after Bach had reached manhood. Arcangelo Corelli died (1713) while Bach was in service at Weimar, and his favourite Antonio Vivaldi (d. 1743) preceded him to the grave by only seven years. With his contemporary, the brilliant Giuseppe Tartini (1692–1770), Bach, perhaps, was not familiar. But the Italian School of Violin-playing culminated in him, and greatly surpassed the prevalent standards; to what an extent is revealed by the fact that, when Corelli's Sonatas reached Paris in 1753, three years after Bach's death, not a violinist is said to have been found there with ability to play them! The statement, if correct, permits us to relate Bach's technique to that of his period.

If Bach's instrumental music largely declares an Italian parentage, his Clavier works associate him with another national School. For their models he looked principally to France, and his introduction to them at Celle was an early experience of his career. France's musical Renaissance expressed itself in the Clavier *Suite*. The word is French, but the music it denotes was not localized. It everywhere comprehended a string of dance measures whose characteristics were their profusion and diversity.

Their contrasts, no doubt, originated the idea of bringing a number of them together in what became the earliest cyclic art-form. At the outset no rigid principle selected the movements admitted to the Suite. But, by the middle of the seventeenth century, four had established a universal claim for inclusion—the German Allemande, the French-Italian Courante, the Spanish Saraband, and the Italian Gigue. You find them, and in that order, in Bach's Suites and Partitas, in the whole eighteen of which the Gigue is only once missing as the final movement. Arrangements of this kind bore no general title. In England they were called "Lessons" (as by Handel and John Christian Bach); in Germany "Partitas" or "Partien" (as by Bach); in France "Suites" and "Ordres"; in Italy "Sonatas." But the French composers, especially François Couperin and Jean-Baptiste Lully, so identified the form with their own country that Bach not only took them as his models, but distinguished his own compositions with a French label.

On other grounds Bach was attracted to Couperin, though hardly indebted to him. As he demonstrated in the famous "Forty-Eight," his adoption of equal temperament for the Clavier enabled him to

play in every key, minor and major, and so brought the neglected black notes into use. But this innovation, along with the complexity of his music, necessarily jettisoned the old system of fingering, which kept the thumb and every finger but the second and third on each hand normally out of action. Bach, on the contrary, gave the thumb its regular function in the scale and made the neglected fourth finger pull its weight. Couperin also devised a system which brought the thumb into use, though in a less methodical way. But his treatise was not published till 1717, and Bach cannot have been indebted to it. Yet, there are clear proofs that his French contemporary—Couperin died in 1733—interested him deeply and had his admiration.

France's influence on Bach is otherwise revealed. His Suite or Overture in B minor, published in 1735, consists, like his French Suites, of dance movements. But it differs in that it opens with a slow Introduction followed by a fugal Allegro, as do his orchestral Overtures and those Handel wrote for the Stage. The form is that of the classic Opera Overture as Lully wrote it, and as it continued till Gluck reformed it after Bach's death.

Bach's intellectual curiosity was insatiable, and, excepting Beethoven, unique among the Masters. The compulsion of curiosity which dragged him as a youth to Hamburg and Lübeck, invited him to his contest with Marchand, and twice set him on the road in pursuit of Handel, moved him as urgently to investigate the music of other countries. And his larger Suites for the Clavier appear to indicate that the English School was not unfamiliar to him. They were known to his sons as the "English Suites," Forkel gathered, because they were written for an Englishman of rank, an obvious conjecture but improbable solution. Another explanation has been found in the fact that the first Suite opens on the theme of a Gigue by Charles Dieupart, a popular French harpsichordist in London during Bach's early manhood. But I think a more satisfactory explanation can be deduced from the fact that, unlike their French fellows, each English Suite begins with a Prelude, as do those of Henry Purcell and his precursors. Since Bach was acquainted with Dieupart, Purcell would hardly be unknown to him—indeed attributed to him in the Bachgesellschaft Edition is a Toccata and Fugue by Purcell, the only Englishman whose place

among the Great Masters is universally conceded. It is agreeable to reflect that Bach knew English music at a period of distinction it has never excelled, but to-day boldly and confidently soars to approach.

So, with one reservation, the ancestry of Bach's keyboard and instrumental music is French and Italian. But that of his vocal works is uncompromisingly German. They reveal him, indeed, as the very flower of the German Renaissance, the greatest voice out of Germany after Luther, and, in his most serious aspect, Luther's corollary. That he should have emerged at this period is the more remarkable when we reflect on Germany's musical insignificance to this point. Herself an unwieldy system of noncohering states, lacking a common pivot, political or artistic, and controlled by no national instinct, she had so far reacted feebly to those impulses shaping musical culture elsewhere. Moreover, early in the century of Bach's birth she plunged into the vortex of the Thirty Years War, and emerged from it less than forty years before he saw the light. Yet, so soon as the Treaty of Westphalia gave peace, even a nebulous unity, to her disjointed system, at a bound she achieved sovereignty in the realm of music. It was, how-

ever, not in Handel's Operas and operatic Oratorios that her new voice was heard, but in utterances of noble elevation in which Bach's genius displayed itself—the Passion, Cantata, Choral. Let me indicate concisely the paths by which they reached him.

Sir Hubert Parry once deduced, from her late submission to it, that Germany was less apt for music than her neighbours. Charles Burney came to that conclusion twenty-five years after Bach's death. In truth, music tardily fired Germany's soul, not as an aesthetic experience, but as the vehicle of religious emotion. It has been said that the German Renaissance is only another name for the German Reformation. Certainly it is so in the sphere of Music, where the Choral and Cantata as clearly express Germany's Renaissance culture as the galleries of Italy or the drama of England reveal the peculiar genius of their peoples.

The Reformation stemmed the tide of Church music in Germany along the channels it so far had followed. For the Evangelical Church rejected the musical apparatus of the ancient Creed along with its dogma and ritual, preferring its music, like its liturgy, to be congregational in form and utterance. Luther set the new course in his

Achtliederbuch, the first Lutheran Hymnbook, published in 1524, the source of an expanding stream of dignified hymnody which is Lutheran Germany's proudest heritage, "the *Feste Burg* of German music," Sir Charles Stanford appropriately called it. Thus, reaching out on one side to the severe plain-song of the Latin Church, and, on the other, to popular folksong from which it did not disdain to borrow, the Choral was deep rooted in the affection of the German people within a century of Luther's death, and fed the genius of her composers. Set in four-part harmony, it assisted the development of a new harmonic structure. And, since it was essentially the apparatus of religion, it aided and inspired the organist to develop and perfect his technique.

So, in the critical ninety years between Palestrina's death and the birth of Bach the Choral became the most vital factor in Germany's musical experience. Of the Cantata, Passion, Oratorio, Motet, Organ Prelude, Fugue, and Variation, it controlled the form and supplied the material. Bach's art is inextricably associated with it. His earliest and his last work as a composer was based on it. All the Chorals in common use he harmonized with matchless skill. They

are rarely absent from his Cantatas and Oratorios. They provide the core of his Passions, the most intimate part of his Motets. His Organ technique was developed on them, and they are the theme of the bulk of his music for that instrument. In brief, he associated them with all he did in the service of God, embellishing them like precious jewels in a holy shrine.

Historically, as its name declares, the Cantata was Italian. But for the composition the word came to denote Bach preferred the term "Concerto," invented early in the seventeenth century to distinguish New Style concerted music from plainsong monotone. To Giacomo Carissimi, who died only eleven years (1674) before Bach's birth, are referred its distinctive features—the association of declamatory Recitatives, solo Arias, and orchestral interludes in a short work suitable for the Church or concert room. In this shape it passed from Italy to Germany, where it was forthwith admitted to the Lutheran liturgy, in which, at first, its use seems to have been restricted to festival occasions. But it soon established itself as the "Hauptmusik" of the Sunday morning service. The earlier German Cantatas, however, those of Albert, Schütz, or Hammerschmidt,

for instance, were modelled rather on the Chamber Cantata and had little affinity with Bach's massive compositions, except in their use of the Choral. For he brought to their creation the elaborate technique he had acquired already on the organ. Yet, their virtuosity is not their most distinctive characteristic. For, they were heard in a form of public prayer closely co-ordinated. It pivoted on the Gospel for the Day; the opening Motet anticipated it, the hymns were based on it, so was the sermon, whose text was taken from it, and so was the Cantata that preceded it. Thus, Bach's Cantatas are not wholly intelligible to us unless we realize that, when writing them, he placed himself in the pulpit, as it were, to expound the Gospel text in terms of music. To the task he brought a mind well versed in theological dialectics, and, with it, a devout spirit as profound as it was sincere, resolved to give his exposition the most persuasive force of which his art was capable. His Cantatas might aptly be termed his Sermons; for, in intention, they are no less.

The Masses have the design and derivation of the Cantatas—they apply the New Style to portions of the liturgy formerly polyphonic. Bach's Mass in B minor,

in effect, consists of three Cantatas, the "Kyrie," "Gloria," and "Credo," with an epilogue. The *Magnificat*, also, is an elaborate Cantata, and in its first state actually was punctuated with Chorals. But the Motets and Passions are in another category. Their ancestry, in the one case, is patently German, and, in the other, that strain predominates. Bach's Motets are distinguished from his Cantatas in form and in purpose. They are *a cappella* music, exclude the Solo Aria, dramatic Recitative, operatic orchestra, and are the finest flower of his polyphonic technique. But their austerity was the consequence of their usage. For, with one possible exception, they are funeral music, "Trauermusik." Bach's talented relatives Johann Christoph and Johann Michael wrote similar Motets, and so did his predecessors in the Leipzig Cantorate. As we have it in Bach's authorship, therefore, the Motet is patently of German ancestry, an interesting association of the polyphonic tradition with the Lutheran ritual.

The Passion music also sprang from a German source. For, the custom of chanting the Passion story in Holy Week was ancient, and Luther's conservatism retained it. At Leipzig its performance took place at

Vespers on Good Friday afternoon, either in St. Thomas's or in the sister church of St. Nicholas. But the elaborate compositions Bach wrote were only in Leipzig's very recent experience. Until 1721 the setting used was contemporary with Luther! Leipzig heard the first "musicirt Passion" (a composition which, like Bach's, employed the resources of the New Style) only two years before Bach came to St. Thomas's. His *St. John Passion*, performed in 1723, was but the second of its kind performed at Leipzig, where conservative feeling was scandalized by the trespass of Opera upon a domain so sacred.

Assuredly Bach did not merit this resentment; it is his distinction to have rescued the Passion from the trappings of the theatre, and to have placed it, in its noblest form, at the service of religion. For the spirit that animated Palestrina passed from Italy when Opera was born, and the modern Oratorio, of which Bach's are the perfect example, was begotten of the exiled Italian tradition by its union with the Passion Music of Germany. They first met in Heinrich Schütz, the earliest German composer to free himself from Italian conventions, and so to evolve a national style. Born exactly one hun-

dred years before Bach, his Passions exhibit a reverent emotionalism which makes him Bach's direct ancestor. He admits no Arias, uses no reflective Chorals. But his Recitative is flexible, his Choruses are terse and dramatic, and, like Bach, he sets forth his text with reverent restraint. In a word, we first detect in him the serious purpose which is the characteristic of German music. But, a generation later, the influence of Opera, established and vigorous at Hamburg, threatened to deflect the Passion from its dignified and appropriate course. In 1704 Reinhard Keiser, a man eleven years Bach's senior, produced there a dramatic Passion which contemptuously discarded the Bible text, ejected the Choral, and unfolded the narrative in conventional rhymed stanzas. Some of his imitators even inserted stage directions in the text! Thus, when Bach took office at Leipzig in 1723 the German Passion was in critical peril. It is not the least of his achievements to have rescued it from Hamburg's contaminating secularism and completely to have vindicated the German tradition. He reinstated the Bible text, infused a religious intention into the secular forms Oratorio borrowed from Opera, elevated the Choral to a height of emotional appeal it had

not yet attained, and produced a masterpiece, dramatic, but essentially devotional. Its technical majesty excites our homage. But chiefly we bow before the fact that it affords a presentation of the Bible story deeply pondered, supremely reverent, fundamentally devotional.

Of all the forms in which Bach expressed himself Oratorio and Fugue were the modes of utterance most attuned to his nature. His Fugues are unique because, among his predecessors and contemporaries, he alone fully realized the romantic and artistic possibilities of the fugal form. His personality is behind every bar of them. They are the poetry of a Master who found it natural and congenial to express himself in that form. His relation to the Fugue, in fact, is that of Beethoven to the Sonata, or of Haydn to the Quartet.

A natural adaptation of the vocal canonic form, the Fugue reached Bach through German models, though Forkel names the Italian Frescobaldi among those he studied. In an earlier generation the contrapuntist Andrea Gabrieli (d. 1586) had been remarkable. Through his pupil Pieter Sweelink his technique passed directly to Georg Böhm and Johann Reinken, and so to

Bach, who sat at the feet of both of them. Bach was also in intimate contact with the two Masters of his early years, Johann Pachelbel and Dietrich Buxtehude. Of the former his eldest brother and teacher was the pupil, and to hear the second he journeyed to Lübeck in his teens, might indeed have succeeded him there if the charms of Fräulein Buxtehude had sufficiently assisted her father's design! From these mentors he received the principles of his own more brilliant art. But, till he expounded it by rule and example, the Fugue was a contrapuntal, soulless exercise. Among its Masters Bach had high regard for Johann Josef Fux of Vienna, whose *Gradus ad Parnassum*, published in 1725, was a standard manual. But in Fux's hands the Fugue was a mechanical and lifeless exercise. "First choose a subject suitable to the key you intend to compose in," he directs, "and write it down in that part in which you propose to begin. Then repeat the subject in the second part, either at the interval of a fourth or fifth, adding such notes in the first part as will agree with it." And so on, with the prosaic precision of a cookery-book! Still, sanctioned in the generation that preceded Bach's birth, these elementary prescriptions afforded the foundation on

which he reared his more splendid art. Applying the expanded key-system of his *Well-tempered* Clavier, and enriching his themes with a wealth of melody and contrapuntal resource the Fugue had never experienced, Bach evolved a nervous organism out of Fux's skeleton and fashioned a poem from an exercise.

We have reviewed, very inadequately, the language in which Bach worked. And what is our conclusion? He spoke in forms that are now archaic. He invented no new one. None was more firmly linked with the past than he, none more obedient to its conventions. No other of the Great Composers was so medieval in the circumstances of his life. He spent it in one corner of Germany, and for the last twenty-five years of it never, save once, travelled above a hundred miles from his centre. Indeed, he worked in such artistic isolation, was so shut in upon himself, had such little opportunity to test his genius by experiment, that we must suppose him driven to compose by sheer compulsion from within.

But, medieval in the forms in which he expressed himself, his technical skill in them remains unique and unsurpassed. No one has approached him in the

miraculous complexity of his part-writing, or in his ingenuity in weaving melodic strands into a single fabric. No one equally displays his gift of melody, his sense of form, the virile quality of his themes, the boldness of his technique, even the daring of his harmonic colouring. Thus, even within the forms he used, Bach is dateless, his art perennial, immortalized by the intense individualism that informed it. Directed by a faith childlike in its simplicity, he used it to interpret the infinite, saw the heavens opened, and was prophetically oracular. Only Beethoven approaches him in this quality, and both stand upon a peak of wonder. From Mozart onwards his peers have done homage to his example, even in forms he never knew. So, he belongs to no age, at once remote from us and yet intimately close. Schumann summed him up in a sentence: "Music owes as much to Bach as a religion to its founder."

The Leipzig Cantorate in Bach's Time

II.

MY purpose in this paper is simple and particular. I shall not entertain you with reflexions on Bach's music, nor shall I expound his personality. I aim only to make him visible to you in his daily experiences, limiting my sketch to the period when his genius was at its zenith. And I shall dare to assume in you both the curiosity and, if I may hazard the imputation, the ignorance which first moved me to attempt the investigation.

I do not contest the dictum, that an artist's work is of more consequence than his personality. But I cannot imagine serious interest in the one failing to induce curiosity in the other; indeed, in Bach's case, his work is not intelligible apart from the context of his career.

So, I take you back at a bound to Leipzig in the year 1723. The month is May, the date the 5th, and the day Wednesday, the eve of Ascension Day. We cross the Market-place, enter the Rathaus, which survives in rugged dignity, ascend the staircase, and pass to the Council Chamber, where their Magnificences the Burgomasters and

civic Councillors are already seated. Their business is with a middle-aged man, stoutish in habit, short-sighted, plainly dressed in sober black, who wears a bob-wig carelessly set over a massive face, and stands respectfully, but with incorrigible dignity. He is informed that, after a year's vacancy, the Council has appointed him to the Cantorship of St. Thomas's School, upon conditions to which it invites his signature. They pledge him to lead a sober life; to maintain the music in the two principal churches in worthy repute; to show deference to their Magnificences; to instruct his scholars diligently, treat them considerately, and punish them with moderation; to avoid lengthy and operatic music; accept no office in the University without the Council's consent, nor leave the town without the licence of the ruling Burgomaster. A week later, having been examined meanwhile and found competent in the tenets of Lutheran orthodoxy, he signs the ancient "Formula concordiae" which summarizes them, and a fortnight thereafter is inducted ceremoniously into his office.

The scene is now the ancient Schoolhouse adjoining St. Thomas's Church. Here, at nine o'clock on the summer morn-

ing of the first of June, in the roomy Aula overlooking the sluggish Pleisse and its pleasant meadows, a select company is assembled, members of Council, of the Consistorium, of the clergy, prominent citizens, and, can we doubt, Frau Bach with her four step-children. Grouped round a Prefect at the door, the scholars sing a Motet before entering, and being hushed to orderly silence, Carl Friedrich Menser, principal Town Clerk, declares the purpose of the occasion. Twelve months before, he rehearses, it had pleased the Almighty to call to his rest Johann Kuhnau, late Cantor of St. Thomas's, in whose room the worshipful Council had appointed Johann Sebastian Bach, lately Capellmeister to the Princely Court of Anhalt-Cöthen, being assured that he would treat his superiors with respect and deference, cultivate cordial relations with his colleagues, and instruct his scholars in music and the wisdom and fear of God. Congratulations are offered, more music is sung, and the company disperses. No one, least of all Bach's assertive patrons, has realized that Clio had dipped her pen to record such a chapter in the history of music as had not yet been written.

St. Thomas's School, of which

Bach was now the Cantor, was an Augustinian foundation dating from the year 1212—you may still trace the monastic buildings in its locality. At the Reformation the civic Council assumed its management, and thereafter, as was the practice in Germany, its scholars furnished with choirs the churches the Council controlled, receiving their education in return. Thus was Luther brought up at Eisenach. Bach experienced the same discipline there nearly two centuries later, and afterwards at Ohrdruf and Lüneburg. At Leipzig he now controlled a similar system.

The constitution of St. Thomas's School was established by a civic ordinance of 1634, still effective when Bach came to Leipzig. The staff consisted of a Rector, Conrector, Cantor, and Tertius; in that order of seniority they constituted the *Superiores* and taught the foundationers. There were, besides, four junior masters—the *Quartus*, *Quintus*, *Sextus*, and *Septimus*—who instructed the non-foundationers, or, as we should say, the day-boys. The Rector and the Cantor had their residences in the School buildings, and, like the former, the Cantor took part in the general curriculum. Bach was fully competent to do so, but, the ob-

ligation proving irksome, he was released from it on his agreement to pay a substitute. Relieved of that task, his duties followed a regular routine. He rose with the school at five in summer, at six in winter, took his "Mittagessen" at eleven, and went to bed at eight. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings he practised the upper classes in music. On Thursday morning he and they attended church. On Saturday morning he gave a lesson in Luther's Catechism, and in the afternoon rehearsed the next day's Cantata. On Sunday he conducted the Cantata in one or other of the city's chief churches. Apart from minor administrative duties and private teaching, his time otherwise was his own; and he had no difficulty in filling it.

It was Bach's chief duty to furnish out of the School's foundationers choirs for the four churches controlled by the civic Council—St. Peter's (Peterskirche), the New Church (Neukirche or Matthaikirche), St. Thomas's (Thomaskirche), and St. Nicholas's (Nikolaikirche). A fifth church, with which he was occasionally associated, was the University's Paulinerkirche, for whose music, however, St. Thomas's School was not responsible. The four

churches varied in their musical requirements. At St. Peter's congregational hymns were sung by a small and not very competent choir. In the New Church conventional Motets of the polyphonic period were performed; consequently its choir was more expert. But the music we particularly associate with Bach, his Oratorios, Passions, Masses, Cantatas, was only heard in the two principal Churches (Hauptkirchen), St. Thomas's and St. Nicholas's, in both of which a generous feast of worship was held on Sundays and Festivals. It lasted with brief intermission from six in the morning till three or four in the afternoon. Normally, Bach and his music were associated only with the so-called "Hauptgottesdienst," the principal service of the Lutheran liturgy, then as now. Beginning at seven it was prolonged until noon. I will outline its lengthy ritual presently. But here we need to remark that every Sunday morning, in one or other of the two principal churches, but not in both, certain portions of the music sung at "Hauptgottesdienst" were ornately rendered by Choir, Organ, and Orchestra. The most important was the Cantata, an elaborate interlude which usually filled half an hour, and never less than twenty minutes. It was, and

is still, performed with full orchestral accompaniment under the Cantor's direction. Normally "music," as Bach's generation understood the term, was rendered only at this service. Afternoon Vespers—at a quarter to two—was of a simple character, except on Christmas Day, Easter Day, and Whit Sunday, when a Latin *Magnificat*—of which Bach has left us an example—was sung with full orchestral accompaniment, and on Good Friday, when a Passion was sung with similar resources alternately in St. Thomas's and St. Nicholas's. Apart from normal Sundays and Church festivals, among which was included the commemoration of the Reformation, or "Lutherfest," the only recurring occasion which called for "musical" celebration was the annual change-over of the Civic Council, at a service for which Bach composed some of his finest Cantatas. If to these constant obligations are added such weddings or funerals as demanded a Cantata or Motet, we have before us a complete tale of the occasions on which Bach was required either to compose "music" himself or to provide it from other sources. He was not so prolific in this form of composition as some of his contemporaries—his friend Telemann and his competitor Graupner, for

instance. But in the course of his twenty-seven years at Leipzig he wrote approximately 265 Cantatas, four Passions, one *Magnificat*, five Masses and six Motets. How many similar works by other composers he painfully copied by hand it is impossible to say. His eyesight weakened under the constant strain, and, promising a cure, an English oculist eventually killed him.

Such were Bach's duties. The resources for fulfilling them were inadequate and inconsiderable. We gather positive information on the matter in a Report written by himself in 1730. His singers then totalled fifty-four. Seventeen of them he described as competent (*brauchbaren*); they formed his Cantata Choir, which was always on duty in the church in which the Cantata was sung. Twenty others he classified as *Motettensinger*, less competent than the seventeen, but sufficiently capable to serve the principal church, St. Thomas's or St. Nicholas's, in which the Cantata choir was not functioning that morning. There remained seventeen singers, the pitiful tail of the school, whom, with an angry splutter of his pen, Bach dismissed as no musicians at all.

Let me draw attention to a fact

which, I find, is not understood: St. Thomas's was not a Choristers' School of the modern English type, *i.e.* a body of juvenile Trebles. When Bach nominated candidates for vacancies in 1729 he recommended two youths who sang Alto and one Tenor. Of the seventeen who formed his principal choir in 1730 only five or six were less than seventeen years old. Of his twenty *Motettensinger* half were over seventeen. Of the unmusical tail nine were in that category. This, to us, astonishing fact is explicable, though still surprising, when we discover the ages at which pupils entered the school. Very rarely any were admitted under fourteen. Over a long term of years I find that forty-three were enrolled at sixteen, nineteen at seventeen, nine at eighteen, three at nineteen and twenty, and actually one at twenty-one! Hence, Bach's choir was not a body of highly trained boys and mature professional men singers. His fifty-four foundationers furnished him with Tenors and Basses as well as Sopranos and Altos. The choir is similarly constituted to-day, and, though its technique is high, it is deficient in tone and body. Bach was conscious of this defect. For the immaturity of his young voices is revealed in the disproportionate number of singers in the

underparts: in 1730, for instance, he counted thirty Tenors and Basses against twenty-four Sopranos and Altos. Fourteen years later his singers totalled fifty-four, as in 1730. The first, or Cantata, Choir numbered seventeen, as earlier. The Motet Choir was rather weaker, seventeen as against twenty. The tail numbered twenty as against seventeen. The parts were thus sustained in each Choir:

	S.	*A.*	*T.*	*B.*
Choir I.	5	2	3	7
II.	4	4	5	4
III. (in the New Church)	3	4	4	2
IV. (in St. Peter's)	1	1	4	1

In all, thirteen Sopranos, eleven Altos, sixteen Tenors, and fourteen Basses! Uniting the first and second Choirs, Bach had nine Sopranos, six Altos, eight Tenors, and eleven Basses, *i.e.* nineteen Tenors and Basses against fifteen Sopranos and Altos!

These figures are informative when we seek to determine how Bach, with his slender and imperfectly competent singers, performed music scored for two Choirs, a problem particularly interesting in relation to the *Matthäuspassion*. Should you hear that work in St. Thomas's to-day you will see in the gallery, where Bach first con-

ducted it, more than two hundred performers, and, as soloists in the foreground, the finest singers from the Leipzig Opera supported by the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Bach performed it under vastly different conditions, for St. Thomas's School furnished his soloists, his chorus, and, in some degree, his instrumentalists as well. Now, the *Matthäuspassion* is scored not only for two Choirs and two Orchestras, but also for two bodies of soloists. Of the two, the "Coro primo" has far the heavier task: excepting a few bars of music, the entire Bible narrative is sung by it, chiefly by the Tenor Evangelist and the Bass "Jesus." Therefore, since Bach had in all only thirty-four singers in his "Coro primo" and "Coro secondo," we must conclude that at least eighteen, and surely all his Cantata singers, were in the first Choir, and the remaining sixteen in the second. Thus, when Bach wrote the directions "Coro primo" and "Coro secondo" in his Score, he did not indicate an arbitrary or haphazard division of his forces. His "Coro primo" was his Cantata Choir. His "Coro secondo" was his body of less competent Motet singers. And that is the reason why he gave it so little music in the Passion to perform by itself, and also why the few four-part choruses allotted to it are

relatively simple. The Choral melodies throughout were sung, no doubt, by the Trebles of the junior choirs. The whole of the Thomaner Trebles sing the Choral in the first movement to-day, and the effect is stupendously fine.

And what of Bach's instrumentalists? We know his requirements, for he states them in the Report on his forces in 1730. He needed an orchestra of twenty—Strings, Flutes, Oboes, Bassoons, and occasionally Horns, Trumpets, and Drums. Like other towns, Leipzig maintained a body of professional musicians who played in the churches and fulfilled secular engagements. But from that source in 1730 Bach was able to draw only two Violins, two Oboes, two Trumpets, and a Bassoon player. For other instruments he was dependent either on his scholars, whose assistance in the orchestra inconveniently withdrew them from the Choir, or on the "Collegium Musicum," a University Musical Society founded in 1704, of which Bach became conductor in 1729. In what year he ceased to direct it cannot be determined precisely. But he was still in office in 1739, at a considerably later date than Spitta supposed. While his connexion with it lasted, he drew on it for his orchestral

players. But the Cantatas of his latest period, when his association with it was broken, reveal how gravely he was handicapped by inadequate or imperfect orchestral material.

I pass from Bach's resources to their employment. St. Thomas's maintained what we should call a Cathedral service. But "figural music," that is, the elaborate music of which Bach's Cantatas are examples, was required normally only at the so-called "Hauptgottesdienst," the chief service of Lutheran usage on Sundays and Festivals. The Cantata was sung in the course of it, either in St. Thomas's or St. Nicholas's, but not in both. On the first two days of the three high Festivals, however, it was heard in both churches, at "Hauptgottesdienst" in the one, at Vespers in the other, while on the third day it was performed in one or other of them, as on Sundays. Let me first make clear to you the service in which the Cantata had its place.

It is a fact familiar to students of liturgies, that while Luther's original prescriptions formed the invariable basis on which his churches established their uses, they were permitted, even encouraged, to vary their forms according to local inclination. This fact makes their study an intricate

labour, and only after very extended enquiry was I able to reconstruct the liturgy Bach was familiar with at Leipzig. It was modelled, obviously, on the Catholic Mass; indeed, among other characteristics was its conservative retention of portions of the Roman Office; for instance, the "Kyrie," "Gloria," "Credo" and "Sanctus" were sung in Latin, while the Gospel, Collect, and Preface were intoned in that tongue. In fact, Latin was so largely used in the Leipzig service during Bach's Cantorate, that the congregation was provided with manuals—the liturgy itself was never printed *in extenso*—containing vernacular prayers for private use during these portions of the service. The fact is not generally understood that Bach's *Magnificat*, settings of the "Sanctus," "Kyrie," and "Gloria," even the "Benedictus" and "Agnus Dei" of the Mass in B minor, were relevant to the Leipzig service. On ordinary Sundays it began with an Organ voluntary. Then the choir in the West Gallery sang a Motet, usually from a sixteenth century compilation by Erhard Bodenschatz, less frequently from a more recent one by Melchior Vulpius. When the Motet was over, the clergy entered from the vestry. I cannot determine whether an Introit was sung as they

proceeded, the one to the altar, the other to the pulpit. In any case it had no musical importance. The liturgy proper began with the "Missa," that is, the "Kyrie" and "Gloria in excelsis." Both were sung by the choir in the Gallery, but to music that differed according to which "Coro" was present. If the Cantata was to be heard later, the "Missa" was sung "mit Music," that is, elaborately, to Latin words. If, however, the Motet Choir was present, both "Kyrie" and "Gloria" were sung in hymn form to German words. After the "Gloria" the Collect was intoned, preceded by the traditional Salutation or "Gruss" of the Roman liturgy—"The Lord be with you; And with thy Spirit; Let us pray." At its conclusion the choir sang a four-part *Amen.* The Epistle was then read in German at the lectern in the chancel, and after it came the first of the congregational hymns, the so-called *de tempore* or seasonal hymn, bearing therefore upon the Gospel, which was ceremoniously intoned in Latin at the altar on its conclusion. The choir responded with the traditional "Gloria tibi Domine," generally in a simple unison formula, but in six-part harmony at festivals. Then followed the "Credo," also in Latin, chanted to the ancient plain-song, two sen-

tences of which Bach wove into the Mass in B minor.

The service had now lasted half an hour. The sermon was imminent, and an interval of relaxation was provided. It was filled by the "Hauptmusik" or Cantata, the words of which were always closely relative to the Gospel for the day, and so an introduction to the sermon, which expounded it. When I last visited the Thomaskirche I seemed to see the congregation subside to its seats in the great church as the "Credo" ended. I pictured the clergy withdrawn to the vestry under the tower as the organist extemporized with brilliant flourishes and the players tuned their instruments. I saw some twenty youths grouped in a semicircle at the front of the West Gallery, and among them, seated at a Clavier, a stoutish gentleman in bob-wig and black coat with silver buttons worn under a black gown. He lifted his hand and the tuning ceased. He made another gesture and the "Hauptmusik" began.

Upon the Cantata's conclusion the seated congregation sang Luther's metrical version of the Apostles' Creed, and, after it, the so-called "Kanzel-Lied" (Pulpit hymn), which varied with the season. During the singing of it the preacher entered

the pulpit. His sermon lasted normally one hour. Then came the General Confession, Absolution, a couple of prayers, a multitude of church notices, thanksgivings, publications of banns, intimations of deaths and funerals, and the morning was well advanced when, after pronouncing the Pauline benediction, the preacher left the pulpit, while the second part of the Cantata or a congregational hymn was sung.

The long service now entered upon its second and principal part, the Administration of the Holy Communion. The order varied according to the season. On ordinary Sundays the Lord's Prayer was first intoned at the altar, followed by the "Verba Institutionis" (*i.e.* the words of consecration in St. Matthew's Gospel). At festivals a Latin Preface was intoned which led up to the "Sanctus," sung by the choir. Then followed the Administration of the Sacrament, and, while it proceeded, hymns, and occasionally a Latin Motet, were sung. Post-Communion Collects followed, and the service ended about mid-day with the Blessing.

The ritual I have outlined constituted the principal service on every Sunday and Feast Day. It was the only constantly recurring one for which Bach had to compose

or provide "music," the only regular occasion for which his choristers needed to be prepared. Services were held in all the churches throughout the week, but concerted music was not sung at them; the Saturday Motets, which to-day are a feature at Leipzig, had not been instituted; and the other Sunday services were of a simple character.

Apart from his rehearsals of choir and orchestra, Bach's official part in this orgy of worship was restricted. He accompanied his "chorus primus" to whichever of the principal churches was entitled to hear the Cantata. Having directed its performance his duty was done. The preliminary Motet had been conducted by a Prefect, who also started the hymns, unless the Cantor chose to do so. But we can be sure that Bach's devout nature did not permit him to limit his church attendance to the obligations of official duty—the contents of his library indicate that he was an avid sermon-taster. Still, he was free to leave the church after the Cantata was sung, and the services that followed did not normally require his attendance. Nowadays the Cantata concludes about 9.30 in the morning, when the instrumentalists disappear from the gallery, and the

Cantor with them. In Bach's period the Cantata was sung at a still earlier hour and was followed, no doubt, by a similar evacuation. But his office required the performance of irregular duties of another character. They were of two kinds—the occasional provision of music at weddings, and attendance at funerals or commemorative funeral services. Bach was sometimes commissioned to provide a Cantata for the wedding of well-to-do people, while a choral funeral was the privilege of rich and poor alike. At the most elaborate funerals the whole School attended at the house of death, sang mourning music, and accompanied the bier to the grave. On such occasions the Cantor's fee was 1 thaler 15 groschen (about one dollar); the fee for a wedding Cantata was 2 thalers (one dollar and a half). Less frequently, prominent citizens were commemorated on Sunday afternoons in a service which included a Motet, of which Bach has left us a few examples. He relied considerably upon these *accidentia*, as they were called, to augment his income. "My situation here brings me about 700 thalers (500 dollars) a year," he writes to a friend in 1730; "and if there are more deaths than usual my income rises propor-

tionally. But," he adds, not entirely with satisfaction, "Leipzig is such a healthy place that this past year I have received from funerals more than 100 thalers less than the average."

Such were the duties Bach and his singers and players performed. It is incorrectly supposed that his position was analogous to that of an English Cathedral organist. In so far as he was a choirmaster the parallel holds. But, as our Cathedral organists are not required to compose the music their choirs perform, so Bach officially was not an organist. Every Leipzig church had its own organist. As Cantor Bach's duty was to provide music for the Cantata, to rehearse his singers and players in it, and to conduct it. When his own compositions were not sung he provided others, and for the most part copied the parts himself. Only once in his life was he privileged to conduct a Cantata of his own in print. His wife, sons, and pupils helped him in the most irksome and least intermittent of his duties, a drudgery against which the humblest choirmaster today would rebel.

Now, turning from the duties of the Leipzig Cantorate and its resources when Bach held the office, let us attempt to

visualize the surroundings in which he lived.*

Take first a general view of Leipzig. Here is a plan (1) of the town as Bach knew it. You see it still enclosed by fortified walls, flanking bastions, and frowning escarpments; they were not removed for more than a generation after his death. The draughtsman names the town a flourishing commercial centre, the seat of a "Welt-berühmte" University. Leipzig, in fact, was one of the foremost commercial communities in Germany, and already eminent as a capital of the printing and publishing trade. Its "Collegium" was distinguished, and it was the most prosperous town in the Saxon Electorate after Dresden; though its population was neither sufficiently numerous—we can number it at about 30,000 when Bach was a citizen—nor sufficiently wealthy to maintain a permanent Opera-house. Its public therefore was not as instructed as Dresden's or Hamburg's, for instance, in the operatic idiom. Hence the Council's injunction to Bach to avoid theatricalism, and also the opposition he encountered to his use of the

* It is not practicable to give the illustrations in this book. The reader is referred to a list of the illustrations, and the sources whence they were derived, at the end of this article.

operatic apparatus in his church music. Outside the walls on every side of the town leafy suburbs and gardens were spread, umbrageous with lime-trees—"Linden-town" the Leipzig poets called their city. Especially was this so on the west, where the Pleisse meandered sluggishly and its mill-wheel clattered noisily behind St. Thomas's School. Within the city walls the houses rose massively four or five storeys high under steeply angled roofs, their yellow fronts brilliant with gaudy frescoes. You may still remark these designs on old buildings. The window-sashes, bright with flowers, were musical with the notes of caged singing birds. The streets, broad and pebbled, were cleansed with running conduits and gushing fountains. Hundreds of oil lamps on oak standards lit the streets at nightfall, while in each of the four Wards watchmen called the hours and fended the citizens against thieves and vagabonds. Bach's Leipzig background is picturesquely medieval.

The chief buildings of the town are evident upon the plan. In the midst appears the ample Market-place, thrice weekly the scene of a bustling fair. Here stood, and stands, the Rathaus—to-day a Museum which houses, among other relics, Hauss-

mann's portrait of Bach. Close by it was Apel's House, the palace of the sovereign when he visited Leipzig, from whose windows he looked out on the torch-lit Market-place, and heard Bach's "Collegium Musicum" make music in his honour. In the south-west Ward lay the Citadel, Schloss Pleissenburg, whose Commandant was Bach's good patron. Outside the walls at that point stretched open country of particular interest to us. For here stood the Windmill, and here, in summer time, amid green gardens, Bach rehearsed his "Collegium Musicum."

At the foot of the plan, bordering the extreme western circumference of the town, stands the building which chiefly attracts us—St. Thomas's with its lofty tower. Between it and the town-wall only the School-buildings intervened, overlooking the meandering Pleisse, whose banks were a country promenade when Bach was alive, a busy thoroughfare to-day through which the stream forces an uneasy passage. Close to St. Thomas's, to the north (left), the squat fabric of the New Church is visible, and, in the north-west angle, the Ranstädter Gate (2), which admitted to the town's chief thoroughfare and gave egress to the Prome-

nade, which we shall see more closely in a later picture. The other churches also are conspicuous—St. Peter's, near Schloss Pleissenburg; St. Nicholas's, with its Schoolbuilding, at the top of the picture, in the Grimma Ward; and the University Church, St. Paul's, in the same quarter. St. John's is not visible; it lay outside the Grimma Gate at the top (east) of the plan.

The student of Bach's secular Cantatas observes how frequently the Pleisse figures in them. He delighted to picture it, as you see it on the screen (3), the resort of tuneful Muses, sporting water-sprites, and laughing wood-nymphs flitting among scented lime-trees. So the print combines poetic imagination and topical detail. Its date is 1736, the year in which Bach received his diploma as Composer to the Saxon Court. You may, indeed, suppose him to be the full-coated gentleman on the right receiving the congratulations of a friend. For, expunging the Muses, the scene was very familiar to him. He looked out upon it from his windows in the Schoolhouse, hard by which a footbridge (the "Thomaspförtchen") crossed the stream for the convenience of such as sought Apel's attractive Garden. Bach declares himself so sensitive to

Nature in his music, that it is pleasant to realize the easy contentment his eye found in its contemplation.

The general plan being clear to you, let us glance at the buildings with which Bach was connected, cursorily at most, closely at St. Thomas's and its School.

Here is the University or Paulinerkirche as Bach knew it (4), fronted by the Grimmaischestrasse, now one of the busiest thoroughfares in the town. Its interior is exceeding magnifical, for it is decked with great treasures which came to it on the German secession from Prague in the 15th century. But our interest is chiefly in its West Gallery, with which Bach is trebly linked. It introduced him to Leipzig, for he had reported on, and no doubt opened, its Organ six years before he became Cantor (1717). It was here, too, ten years later (1727), in the West Gallery that he conducted his *Trauer-Ode* in memory of the beloved Queen of Poland; and here his Motet *Der Geist hilft* was performed in 1729.

As I have remarked, Bach had no personal connexion with the New Church, St. Thomas's nearest ecclesiastical neighbour. An ancient fabric of the barefooted Franciscans, it had fallen into decay,

and had only been restored to use in 1699 to serve Leipzig's growing population. Its music, of the simplest character, was provided by some of Bach's less competent singers under a prefect. Yet, its organist was a candidate for the Cantorship of St. Thomas's in 1723, and one of his predecessors was Bach's successful competitor! For, it is amusing to reflect, Bach was neither the Council's first nor second choice, and only received the appointment because those who were preferred to him declined it. "Since we cannot get Telemann or Graupner," said one of the Councillors, who has since had leisure, perhaps instruction, to revise his judgment, "we must manage with Bach"!

Thirteen years after the New Church reopened its doors, another ancient fane was recovered to the service of religion. St. Peter's was a 13th century foundation, had fallen into disuse at the Reformation, and thereafter was used as a limeshed. It was reopened (1712) eleven years before Bach's appointment, but was of no musical importance, and even lacked an Organ and Choir chamber. Bach's least competent singers served it in charge of a junior Prefect.

St. Nicholas's, which the screen (5) shows you as Bach saw it, was more

ancient than St. Thomas's, and throughout his Cantorate was the senior church, since its pastor held the dignified office of Superintendent. It was, as you see, a massive, irregular fabric, with a stunted tower whose completion was in progress during Bach's Cantorate. Externally the church has been considerably renovated, but the interior presents the features Bach recognized—the huge quadrangular Nave, the lofty recessed Chancel, so different from St. Thomas's, and the roof springing high from slender pillars (6). Though duty compelled him to perform his music in it, Bach did so with little satisfaction and, sometimes, with protest. The reason was partly due to the church's acoustic properties—so much inferior to St. Thomas's—partly to its inconvenient Organ and Choir Gallery. As you observe in the picture, the Gallery is elevated and remote. The sense of aloofness from the congregation is strong as one looks from the Gallery into the great building. Its blemishes are more apparent in this picture (7)—the restricted space available for the choir and instrumentalists, and the fact that its platform, as it were, does not centrally overlook the audience. In Bach's time these disadvantages were exaggerated. Here is a picture of the west wall and Gal-

lery as he knew it (8). The Organ and Choir Gallery are tucked away on the west wall of what we may call the south transept, in a situation acoustically defective. We know that Bach was sensitive to these considerations, and consequently was disinclined to associate his larger compositions with the church. In 1724 he tried to deny it the privilege of hearing the annual Passion music; indeed, if my data are correct, none of his major works was ever given in it, a statement from which, of course, the Sunday Cantatas are excepted.

It is with St. Thomas's that Bach's memory is most closely linked. He was among the hierarchy of its officials, lived in its precincts, and gave to its ancient fabric the first performance of his chief works. The church survives; but the School, in which he lived and worked, was pulled down a quarter of a century ago, a tragic sacrifice to modern convenience. For its demolition ended a partnership of nearly seven centuries, during the greater part of which the two fabrics had suffered little external change. The earliest picture of them is on the screen (9)—it is contemporary with Luther. The church raises a huge bulk that changed little externally over the centuries—the lofty Nave

and dormered roof, the disproportionately planned Chancel, and the clumsily inserted tower rising to a lofty cupola. The Schoolhouse stands immediately before the west door of the church, access to which, you notice, it obstructs. At the Reformation the Augustinian foundation was dissolved, the civic Council took possession, and in 1553 decreed the erection of a new School-building, which thereafter survived unaltered until Bach was an inmate of it. The picture (10) represents the church and School in 1723, the year of his appointment. The church shows no material change. But the School, you observe, has expanded to the south and forms the western side of the Church Square (Thomaskirchhof). This was unfortunate; for the site was not a healthy one, the Church Square having been formerly a burying-ground. The water-conduit, or "Brunnen," in the centre of it was erected only a few months before Bach came to Leipzig. It was removed in 1816 as an impediment to traffic.

There is no doubt that the Schoolhouse was thoroughly unsanitary; the mortality among Bach's young family declares the fact. Its dormitories were inadequate for the scholars; its classrooms were

congested. No provision was made for the recreation of youths whose ages varied from fourteen years to twenty-one, and discipline consequently was bad. Ernesti, Bach's first Rector, an old man and indolent, set his face against reform and change. But his successor compelled the Council to face the situation; the roof was stripped, a new storey and mezzanine were added, and the building took (1732) the form in which it survived for 170 years (11). It housed three separate establishments, each having its own door on the Square—the Rector's on the extreme right, nearest the church, the School's in the middle, the Cantor's on the left. Bach's lodging, however, did not include the whole of the left wing, but only the ground, first, and second floors. The top storeys were allotted to the School, whose buildings fulfilled their purpose unaltered for 127 years after Bach's death. Only in the late sixties of the nineteenth century the narrow passage from the Church Square towards the river was arched. And at about the same period a statue of Leibniz was set up in front of the School-buildings. It stood there till 1908 (12), when it was replaced by Seffner's dignified statue of Bach (13).

Now let me take you to the

western or rearward face of the Schoolhouse. You see it on the screen (14) much as it presented itself to Bach: the Pleisse runs its ancient course in the foreground; its Mill functions, as when he heard its clatter; and the lofty School-buildings blot out all but the roof and tower of the church. Here is a somewhat later view (15), from a different angle, at a period when the broad avenues which now lead to St. Thomas's had begun to be laid out. And here is another (16), with a new and interesting detail. In the process of Bach's rehabilitation none played a more heroic part than Mendelssohn, whose enthusiasm led in 1843 to the erection of the first public monument in Bach's honour. It stands, you notice, immediately in front of that part of the School-building that Bach inhabited. Carry your eye to the third window from the right on the second floor (17). It was Bach's study, the "Componierstube," the room in which the *St. Matthew Passion*, the great Mass, the Motets, and the Oratorios were conceived—a Holy of Holies! Mendelssohn's monument offers homage immediately below it, a worthy gesture, but in its design flagrantly aloof from Bach's genius. To-day it stands almost hidden among the shrubs. And Bach's spirit no longer looks

out upon it. For in 1877 the School migrated to new quarters in the Schreberstrasse, and in 1885 that portion of the old building which obstructed the west door of the church was pulled down. The rest followed in 1902, and for a short period the church (with the Leibniz statue) was fully exposed to view from a western perspective. Subsequently the Church Offices—the "Superintendentur"—were built on the site of the School. They offend by their flagrant modernity, but chiefly by their trespass on sanctified ground.

Having viewed the church's exterior, let us go inside, entering by the door Bach himself used from the Square (18), turn sharply to the left, ascend a broad flight of steps to the Organ Gallery on the west wall, and look down from it on a Sunday morning (19). We should see the women in the Nave, the men flanking them right and left in the side aisles; a low screen dividing the Nave from the Chancel, and, in the middle of it, the black "Pult" or Lectern from which the Epistle was read. A stone font stands in the foreground below the West Gallery; the pulpit, as now, is set against a pillar on the south (right) of the Nave; and galleries fill the side aisles. Here (20) is the

interior as it continued until fifty years ago (1885). The seating is post-Bachian; but the picture reveals the extent to which, in his time, the building was disfigured by galleries and private boxes on the walls, and even under the archway of the Chancel. Another detail of importance emerges. Notice how small is the Chancel arch in proportion to the elevation of the Nave. Its effect is to expose a great surface of bare wall above the arch (the galleries are now removed) facing the choir in the West Gallery, to cut off the Nave from the Chancel, and to give the church acoustic qualities exceptionally responsive and resilient. The absence of a "note" of fixed tonality, the large area of resonant wood, and the comparatively short reverberation, made the building an ideal auditorium.* Bach was inadequately served by his singers. But in St. Thomas's he possessed a platform of exceptional excellence.

I wish I could accept this picture (21) with confidence. It purports to represent the West Gallery of St. Thomas's in Bach's time. The Organ, as now, stands

*A very original and instructive article by Mr. Hope Bagenal, on "Bach's Music and Church Acoustics," appeared in January, 1930, in the *Journal of the Royal Institution of British Architects* (Vol. XXXVII, Third Series, No. 5).

against the west wall. In the foreground the Cantor, lavishly wigged, directs his singers and players, whose distribution, however, is improbable and irregular. The loudest instruments are in the foreground, the players are unprovided with music, and the singers, standing in separate groups, follow their own group conductor! Still, the print reveals the uniform in which Bach's singers fulfilled their Sunday duty—the elders in breeches, full-skirted coats, and ample wigs; the younger in perruques and cloaks such as German schoolboys wear to-day.

I pass, in conclusion, from the church that enshrines Bach's memory to the fabric that preserves his ashes. It is the only circumstance that connects him with it. St. John's lay without the walls, and its churchyard had for generations been the public burial ground. Here, on 31 July 1750, close to the south door visible on the screen (22), Bach was buried in the presence of his scholars and colleagues. As we learn from this picture (23), it was usual to mark the graves with a headstone or memorial slab. Bach's was not thus distinguished. For, in the last years of his life he lost touch with the community he served. He was upon uncordial terms with his employers, who com-

plained that he conducted himself as a Capellmeister rather than a Cantor. His children, who had found high employment, were not sufficiently moved by filial piety to make good the citizens' neglect. So, when it was proposed to commemorate the second centenary of his birth in 1885, it was impossible to identify his grave. Tradition placed it six paces from the south door of the church (24). But the ground had long been disused as a burial place, and, since closer association was not possible, a tablet was fixed to the south wall tersely and vaguely recording Bach's burial in this part of the former graveyard. The tablet is now in the vault of the church. Nine years later (1894) the enlargement of the Nave of the church involved the demolition of its walls and the inclusion within the new fabric of ground so far outside it. That Bach's resting-place might consequently be disturbed was not overlooked, and, while the foundations of the new walls were dug, careful watch was kept for any relic of his interment. The area of close investigation was near the former south door. Within it, after three days' fruitless digging, an oak coffin was exposed which contained the almost perfect skeleton of an elderly male, well-proportioned, mod-

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erate in stature, with massive skull, receding forehead, shallow eye-sockets, and heavy jaws. The skull (25) was compared with Haussmann's and other presumably authentic portraits, from which a skilled anatomist demonstrated that the remains indubitably were Bach's. They were therefore enclosed within an unpretentious limestone sarcophagus, and, along with those of Bach's fellow-townsman Carl Christian Gellert (d. 1769), were lowered to a vault beneath the altar. There they rest in an unworthy Valhalla lately and ineptly embellished.

But, I will not leave you with that picture. Rather look on this (26). From the skull, recovered from the earth on that autumn day, the sculptor Carl Seffner modelled a bust of the immortal Cantor which, better than Haussmann's portrait, reveals Bach as his music presents him to us. For, if it veils the simplicity of a very homely character, it truly records the nobility of one whose commanding and majestic personality no other of the great Masters of music has approached.

Pictorial Illustrations

1. Matth. Seutter's Plan of Leipzig (Terry, *Bach: a Biography*, No. 58).
2. Leipzig from the West (Reimann-Schrader, *J. S. Bach*, page 24).
3. Leipzig from the North (1736) (Terry, *op. cit.*, No. 59).
4. The University Church (Paulinerkirche) (Terry, *op. cit.*, No. 71).
5. St. Nicholas's Church (18th cent.) (Terry, *op. cit.*, No. 67).
6. St. Nicholas's Church (interior) (Terry, *op. cit.*, No. 69).
7. St. Nicholas's Church (Choir Gallery) (Terry, *op. cit.*, No. 69).
8. St. Nicholas's Church (Choir Gallery, 18th cent.) (Terry, *Bach: eine Biographie*, No. 43).
9. St. Thomas's Church and School (1553) (Sachse, *Geschichte der Thomasschule*, No. 1).
10. St. Thomas's Church and School (1723) (Terry, *Bach: a Biography*, No. 60).
11. St. Thomas's School (1732) (Terry, *op. cit.*, No. 61).
12. St. Thomas's School, with the Leibniz Monument (Abdy Williams, *J. S. Bach*, p. 59).
13. The Bach Monument by Carl Seffner (Reimann-Schrader, *op. cit.*, p. 84).

14. St. Thomas's School, west front (Félix Grenier, *J. S. Bach*, p. 129).
15. St. Thomas's School, west front (Abdy Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 68).
16. The Mendelssohn Monument (1843) (Reimann-Schrader, *op. cit.*, p. 57).
17. The Mendelssohn Monument (1843) and the Schoolhouse (Terry, *op. cit.*, No. 62).
18. St. Thomas's Church, south-west door (1710) (*Bach-Jahrbuch*, 1919, frontispiece).
19. St. Thomas's Church, interior (1710) (Terry, *Bach's Cantata Texts*, p. 180).
20. St. Thomas's Church, interior (1885) (Terry, *Bach: a Biography*, No. 63).
21. St. Thomas's Church, West Gallery (1710) (Terry, *Bach's Cantata Texts*, frontispiece).
22. St. John's Church (Johanniskirche) and Churchyard (Terry, *Bach: a Biography*, No. 73).
23. St. John's Church and Churchyard (Reimann-Schrader, *op. cit.*, p. 94).
24. Site of Bach's grave (His, *J. S. Bach. Forschungen über dessen Grabstätte*, p. 5).
25. Bach's Skull (His, *op. cit.*, No. 1).
26. Carl Seffner's Bust of Bach (His, *op. cit.*, No. 6).

NOTE: Only those illustrations are mentioned which are accessible in English or foreign books.

Bach's Cantatas

III.

A BACH Cantata Club* fittingly receives an address on the subject of Bach's Cantatas. For surely in the annals of music there is not a more remarkable story than the tale of the production, neglect, and belated recovery of these masterpieces. In no other form was Bach so prolific. He composed nearly three hundred Cantatas, and over two hundred survive. They fill twenty monumental volumes in the great Bachgesellschaft Edition. Their vocal Scores ask for nearly three feet of lateral space. A prodigious library, the harvest of forty years' unremitting toil!

Yet, in Bach's lifetime this characteristic product of his genius, to which the rest of his music stands as the supplement, rarely invited attention, infrequently compelled admiration. Only one of his Cantatas got itself into print, and, when he was dead, all of them passed into the dark cupboard of oblivion. His widow sold a bundle of them for forty dollars, half the value of the Clavier in her husband's study. His

* The paper was read to the Bach Cantata Club of New York.

son Friedemann disposed of sixty others, for ten cents an autograph! and Leipzig heard no more of them. Richard Wagner once asked Christian Weinlig, who held Bach's post in 1823, what Leipzig remembered about the Cantatas. Weinlig told him that his predecessor thrashed his choristers heartily and conscientiously for their betterment, and that his Cantatas were sung abominably. They left no other memory! And they were rarely heard elsewhere. Occasionally Bach took his choir to a neighbouring town with one in his portfolio. And sometimes, we learn from his cousin, a singer borrowed one for his personal use. But Bach was not a cheerful lender: experience taught him that the manuscript either never came back, or, if recovered, cost him the postage, an expense his frugality resented! In business matters his mind was as orderly as his counterpoint! It would have been better if St. Thomas's had obtained his manuscripts: they would at least have been preserved. As it was, six years after his death the School library retained less than thirty of them. The rest had been divided among his family and passed from sight and knowledge. Occasionally his sons performed one or other of them at Hamburg, Halle, or elsewhere. But the taste of

their generation voted them tiresomely antiquated, and, long before the eighteenth century reached its close, they were as dead and forgotten as those of Telemann, Graupner, and other minor musicians whose genius was eloquent in that form.

But the dissipation of his manuscripts does not completely explain the eclipse of Bach's Cantatas after his death. For, after all, the Cantata was a fugitive expression of Protestant art. It hardly appeared before the century of Bach's birth, was on trial during his lifetime, and passed out of vogue at his death. It is, in fact, one of the characteristics of Bach's artistic career that his duty invited him to express himself—though congenially—in an art-form that did not survive. No other of the Great Masters was similarly handicapped. Gluck in Opera, Handel in Oratorio, Haydn in the Quartet, Mozart and Beethoven in the Symphony, expressed themselves in language as intelligible and agreeable to posterity as to their own generation. But, from one point of view, it was Bach's misfortune that his upbringing, circumstances, and inclination alike invited him to expose an obsolescent idiom in its most perfect form. Hence, though posterity came tardily to realize that even in modern

forms he had something to impart, the generation that followed him let the dust of antiquity lie thick on his scores. When Charles Burney visited Philipp Emanuel at Hamburg, some twenty years after Bach's death, not a note of his father's music was played by the son, who expressed positive contempt for an idiom which had so little in common with his own.

But Bach's Cantatas passed under a cloud of oblivion for a more particular reason. They were produced under such localized conditions, the limitations their use imposed on the composer were so strict, that their performance elsewhere was seriously hindered. Moreover, they are stubborn fare for the incompetent. Even to-day, when choral technique is on a plane of excellence Bach's singers never remotely approached, their performance demands interpretative powers exceeding those which, for instance, Handel's straightforward music requires. And, further, it must be admitted that their texts, though relevant to the occasion for which they were composed, are otherwise uninteresting, in some cases intolerable. In brief, Bach was the last prophet of the tradition, as old as European civilization itself, that Music was the handmaid of

Religion. Hence, in the library of religious music he wrote the last word for a century. After him, the Cantata, or "Hauptmusik," was ejected from the Church service, the historical establishments maintained for its performance generally decayed, and, like the Pianoforte Sonata after Beethoven, the Church Cantata fell from the altitude on which Bach had placed it.

Bach therefore slept in a forgotten grave. Friedrich Doles (Cantor 1756–89), his pupil and successor, openly declared his master's music unsuited to the Church. His next successor, Adam Hiller (Cantor 1789–1801), expressed actual loathing for what he termed Bach's "crudities." One gleam of recognition lit the darkness of the century's closing generation, when Mozart discovered and acknowledged Bach's genius at Leipzig in 1789. But the nineteenth century opened with a new voice uttering a surprising Gospel. In 1802, Nikolaus Forkel, the friend of Bach's sons, published a monograph that invites peculiar reverence: for it first proclaimed Bach's grandeur to the universe. "This sublime genius," wrote Forkel, "this prince of musicians, German and foreign, dwarfs all others from the height of his superiority." Lan-

guage was inadequate to express him. "Let Germany be proud of him," Forkel admonished, "but worthy of him too."

Forkel, however, based his appreciation chiefly on the keyboard music, some of which, even in Bach's lifetime, was in print. Still, his enthusiasm opened new vistas of appreciation. Friedrich Rochlitz, the champion of Beethoven, forthwith placed Bach among "the greater spirits of humanity." Gottfried Schicht, soon to become Cantor of St. Thomas's (1810–23), put the first Score of Bach's vocal music into print since 1708—the Motets that roused Mozart's admiration in 1789. Ten years later the *Magnificat* found a publisher. The *Trauer-Ode* followed, and, in 1821, Breitkopf and Härtel issued the first of the Cantatas—No. 80 (*Ein' feste Burg*). Six more went into type in 1830—the exquisite No. 106 (*Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*) among them. In 1843 Theodor Mosewius published the first appreciation of the Cantatas, a monograph that may still be read with profit. And seven years later their systematic publication began. Instigated by Robert Schumann, the production of "a complete Bach edition" was mooted in a circular addressed "To the serious Friends of

Music." Schumann signed it. Louis Spohr, at Cassel, signed it. Franz Liszt, whose bounty already had raised a monument to Beethoven at Weimar, signed it. Before the year was out the Bachgesellschaft was in being, and in 1851 the first of its sixty volumes was in print. Its subscribers numbered twenty-three royal personages and more than two hundred other enthusiasts, among whom America was already represented. For fifty years, without cessation, the Society functioned, and on its dissolution, in 1900, had exhaustively fulfilled its mission. Bach's neglected autographs had been surprisingly recovered, the complete range of his Titanic genius had been exposed, and, excepting one Church Cantata,* the parts of a secular Cantata,† and a Violin Sonata,‡ all of which have since been restored, the Bachgesellschaft Edition could truthfully label itself "complete." A remarkable, even a stirring, tale of unflagging devotion, of belated homage to a genius long obscured!

I shall, I think, most usefully fulfil my opportunity if I approach the Can-

* *Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut.*

† *Vergnügte Pleissen-Stadt.*

‡ In G major. Apparently the original form of the Trio Sonata in the same key. (Peters ed., Bk. 237.)

tatas from the standpoint of that important constituency conveniently labelled "the ordinary listener." Now, viewing Bach's Cantatas, the ordinary listener will ask the questions he would pose regarding any other category of art. He will desire a definition. He will ask why the artist expressed himself in this particular medium. And, since true art reveals the artist, he will desire to learn how it expounds Bach's personality. It is the major purpose of this address to satisfy these questions.

Samuel Johnson, who knew Bach's youngest son, defined a Cantata as "an air; a grave piece of music." Bach's only partially conform to the definition. His Cantata is a piece of concerted music for voices and orchestra, of from twenty to thirty minutes' duration in performance. It is not restricted to the Aria form, nor is it limited in the number of its movements. But it averages six or seven, and the last of them is usually, but not invariably, a four-part Choral, that is, a hymn-stanza sung to its familiar melody. So planned, the Cantata formed part of one, and only one, service in Lutheran usage, the chief ceremony of public worship (Hauptgottesdienst) on Sundays and certain Festivals. Different towns had different uses; for in-

stance, Advent Cantatas were required at Weimar, but not at Leipzig. Hence, not always with happy results, Bach adapted for Leipzig use Cantatas written for other seasons elsewhere. Nor can we be surprised. For he needed to provide, or compose, fifty-nine Cantatas every year, or five every month. He did this for nearly thirty years. That is, from first to last he was responsible for the performance of about eighteen hundred Cantatas, and, we have it on the authority of his son, himself composed five complete cycles, two hundred and ninety-five Cantatas in all. About thirty were in his portfolio when he came to Leipzig. So he composed two hundred and sixty-five after 1723, and, since he wrote few, if any, during the last six years of his life, this library of masterpieces was the output of twenty-two years, and grew at the rate of twelve Cantatas every year, one every month, an astonishing record of sustained activity and purpose. Two hundred and eight of them survive; but the set of five is complete for only five of the fifty-nine occasions they served, and Friedemann's carelessness chiefly caused the gaps.

Naturally the Cantata was sung only in communities which could provide the expensive apparatus requisite for the per-

formance of what Bach's generation called simply "the Music" (die Musik), or "the principal Music" (Hauptmusik), or "figural Music" (Figuralmusik), meaning New Style music as distinguished from the Old Style Motet, which was sung *a cappella* in strict counterpoint. The choir was provided by the Town-schools (Stadt-Schulen), the orchestra by the civic Guilds of town-pipers and fiddlers. Such a school was St. Thomas's at Leipzig, of which Bach was Cantor, that is, choirmaster. Its *Alumnat* consisted of less than sixty lads, out of whom Bach's chief duty was to train four choirs for as many churches. The churches varied greatly in their musical requirements, and two of them had been only recently reopened for public worship.* Consequently, Bach's principal, or Cantata, Choir—his *Coro primo*, as he styles it in the St. Matthew Passion—served only two of the four, St. Thomas's and St. Nicholas's, the "Hauptkirchen." It was a small body, about eighteen singers, of ages from 13 or 14 to 21, and provided all four parts, Basses, Tenors, Altos, and Trebles, singularly immature voices to tackle Bach's intricate Scores. And his instrumental material was as unsatisfactory. The civic musicians were

* Cf. *supra*, p. 67.

neither numerous nor expert. When Burney visited Germany, twenty years after Bach's death, he observed everywhere the low standard of Church playing. It was certainly no better in Bach's lifetime; we can be sure he never heard his Cantatas rendered with even approximate excellence.

The Leipzig Cantatas were performed on Sundays alternately in the two principal churches, St. Thomas's and St. Nicholas's. Therefore, a few minutes before seven o'clock on Sunday mornings you might have seen Bach and his Cantata Choir stepping across from the School to St. Thomas's, or crossing the Square to more distant St. Nicholas's, while his second Choir, in charge of a Prefect, visited the other church, in which, on that Sunday, a less ornate musical service was performed. The service began in both churches at seven, was inordinately long, and moved in stages timed and closely regulated. The Sermon, its central point, began at eight, and lasted for an hour. An hour-glass in the pulpit measured its duration, and a snuff-box afforded the preacher stimulatory refreshment. Hence, the Cantata, which preceded the Sermon, equally needed restriction in point of duration. In fact, half an hour was allotted to it; Bach's

Cantatas are so uniform in length, that he evidently timed them with particular care. But it astonishes us to realize that these exacting masterpieces were performed at half-past seven in the morning, in an unwarmed church, by singers and players recently dragged from bed and inadequately fed! A heroic age!

The uniform length of Bach's Cantatas is explained by their liturgical use. And what may be called their didactic or exegetic character was also due to the service they decorated. For, it was arranged and coordinated with the closest care. While the English Protestants devised a new Order of Morning Prayer as the normal morning liturgy, Luther, most conservative of reformers, prescribed a service which, in outline, and to some extent in detail, preserved the Roman Mass. Moreover, instead of devising a Bible lectionary, like his English contemporaries, he preferred the Dominical Gospel as the Scripture portion for exposition. The preacher re-read it in German before the Sermon, and it furnished the text of his discourse. The entire service, or, rather, that part of it which preceded the Administration of the Holy Sacrament (which followed the Sermon), was framed round the

Gospel. The opening Motet bore on it, so did the hymns, and so did the Cantata, which, in effect, was the Gospel narrated in dramatic music. It expounded the same text, and even had Bach not generally indicated on his Scores the occasion for which they were composed, their words would reveal it.

Bach's purpose in the Cantata was constant. But the form in which he fulfilled it exhibits significant development. As we have it in his mature style, the Cantata was the offspring of the German Motet mated with the Italian tradition. Bach's Cantatas discover both strains of heredity, and even reveal a conflict between them. Seeing that the Reformation exalted the place of the congregational hymn or Choral in the Lutheran liturgy, early usage inclined to allot to each Sunday certain hymns as specially appropriate to the Gospel for the Day. Particular significance attached to the position between the Gospel and the Sermon, eventually occupied by the Cantata: for the co-ordinated scheme of the service demanded that the music at that point should form a nexus between the two. Consequently, books of libretti were sought appropriate to this purpose, and, under various names, some of them fanciful, cycles of so-called

"Motets" began to appear early in the seventeenth century, fifty or sixty years after Luther's death. For instance, in 1616 the prolific hymnographer Johann Heermann published a compendium entitled "Devotional Church Sighs, or the Little Gospel Bell," a typical title. These texts generally consisted of portions of the Bible and verses of the appointed Sunday hymn, the so-called "canticum de tempore" or "Detemporelied." Further, the music to which they were set exhibited the characteristics of the Old Style era—that is, it refused admission to the dramatic Recitative and florid Aria.

Now, it is illuminating to find that almost the earliest of Bach's extant Cantatas bears the title "Motetto." He wrote it at Mühlhausen in 1708, when he was twenty-two, and called it a "Congratulatory Motet." Its text consists of Bible passages, part of a congregational hymn, and three rhymed stanzas—the normal Motet libretto. The Leipzig Bach is already visible in the music. But its form is constant to the Motet tradition. We find in it no Recitatives; the Arias are of the German Arioso type; the Bible passages are denied dramatic emphasis; and the Choral receives only formal treatment. Now, we have it from Bach him-

self that he accepted his appointment at Mühlhausen chiefly to express himself in the Cantata form. And this Cantata tells us positively where he then stood in relation to it. Evidently he still followed the tradition of Schütz, of Hammerschmidt, of Buxtehude, and was as yet disinclined to associate the operatic apparatus with the Church anthem.

A few months after the performance of his Mühlhausen Motet Bach migrated to Weimar. Here, but not immediately, his views underwent drastic change. Contemporary opinion was sharply divided upon the propriety of admitting the dramatic Recitative and Aria into Church music. Mattheson of Hamburg, the ablest critic of his generation, advocated the innovation, maintaining that the only valid impediment was the incompetence of Church choirs. As to the libretto, Mattheson ridiculed its restriction to Bible and hymn stanzas, demanded texts modelled on the operatic libretto, and asked how composers could express themselves worthily in the angular, inelastic forms conservative prejudice preferred.

The matter resolved itself into the discovery of a libretto which should give the composer the opportunity Mattheson

demanded for him, and, at the same time, satisfy the orthodox. The distinction of having contrived it belongs to Erdmann Neumeister, a young deacon of Weissenfels, who, between 1700 and 1714, published four Cantata Cycles suited to all occasions of the ecclesiastical year. He unreservedly supported Mattheson's plea. "A Cantata," he insisted in his Preface, "is simply a piece of Opera, and, like Opera, consists of Arias and Recitatives." Hence, his first Cycle eliminated the Bible and Hymn-book. But experience, or remonstrance, convinced him that he had pushed his parallel too far. Therefore, to his second Cycle, published in 1708 (the date of Bach's Mühlhausen Motet), he admitted sections for chorus singing, and in his third (1711) and fourth (1714) arrived at a definitive pattern. It retained the Aria and Recitative of the Italian idiom, but found a place for the Bible and Hymn-book, as in the German Motet. In this form the Cantata received its classic libretto, and it was adopted, among others, by Salomo Franck, Bach's colleague at Weimar. So far as I can judge, Bach first used a Neumeister text in February 1714 (No. 18), and one of Franck's a year later (No. 31). Thereafter these two writers provided nearly all his

Weimar Cantatas. They continued to serve him at Leipzig, or were replaced by others who displayed their characteristics. Even in his last years, when he returned to the Hymn-book, Bach used its texts in the Neumeister form, and instructed his librettist Picander to adapt them to that model. Thus Bach followed the general movement. Must we regret it? The Motet in his hands might have developed into an art-form peculiarly German and impressive. Indeed, the Score of the "Actus Tragicus" (*Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit.* No. 106) forbids us to doubt that result, had Bach resisted the current of popular preference. Did his capitulation stifle a national note in German music? Did he delay its progress towards the self-expression it belatedly achieved?

However that may be, in the form he adopted Bach achieved a self-portraiture so vivid that his music and his personality are complementary. There is in every musician something of the painter, and a tinge of the poet. He paints in sound and is eloquent in images and metaphors. Bach's music reveals him pre-eminently as both. His invariable search was for an image, his inclination always to delineate it. There is none of the Cantatas in which this characteristic

cannot be observed. For instance, No. 122, the Christmas *Das neugebor'ne Kindelein*, speaks of the angels swelling the courts of heaven with their adoration. Bach, picturing a company of cherubs piping on a cloud, as in some Renaissance frame, forthwith brushes them in upon his canvas with a Christmas hymn-tune. In Cantata 161, in a movement which breathes a passionate longing for death, he sees the soul soaring upward through the ether, as in Newman's "Gerontius." So, in a figure familiar to us in the *St. Matthew Passion*, he paints in the clouds that veil the Presence, while, from behind them, steals the Passiontide melody

> O sacred Head, surrounded
> With crown of piercing thorn!
> O bleeding Head, empurpled,
> Reviled, insulted, torn!

picturing Him who had endured and conquered Death. I could multiply examples, but one from outside the Cantatas must suffice. It is the opening Chorus of the *St. Matthew Passion*, a stupendous canvas such as Gustave Doré might have limned. In the foreground Bach sees a company of Roman soldiers; in their midst, the Man of Sorrows staggering under the Cross's aching burden,

inexorably impelled towards Calvary. The music moves with unrelenting march-like rhythm above a throbbing pedal point which symbolizes the weary Saviour, while the waiting women, Zion's daughters, raise their voices in a chromatic theme of poignant grief. The concourse swells and surges onward, till the anguished watchers see before them the Cross and its Bearer, the very Lamb of God. At the words the heavens unfold and celestial choirs acclaim the Victim in the melody of the German "Agnus Dei." It is one of the most vivid canvases in Bach's gallery, and, if all else he wrote had perished, would completely reveal his artist-soul.

It is to be accepted as a postulate, therefore, that to comprehend Bach's Cantatas, and to realize his personality in them, we must closely study his reaction to his texts. It will reveal his sensitiveness to verbal suggestion. It will, however, show him moved by objects rather than emotions, by the thing seen rather than by the sensation, the winds, the clouds, the waves, tolling bells, and so forth. An illustration presents itself in Cantata 77 (*Du sollst Gott deinen Herren lieben*), for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity. The Gospel narrates the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and its burden is

the obligation of love, love of God, love of neighbour. It opens with the injunction "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour as thyself. These are the great commandments." But it is to the injunction rather than the mood that Bach reacts. And he enforces it by introducing the melody of Luther's metrical paraphrase of the Decalogue. Cantata 88 (*Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden*) affords another example. The burden of the Sunday lesson is God's love and the confident reliance of His people upon it. But the Cantata opens with Jeremiah's text, "Behold, I will send fishers, and they shall fish them, and hunters, and they shall hunt them," and Bach prefers to illustrate the two verbs, so that in the first part of the Aria we are pulling our nets in a fishing boat, and in the second are following the hunt, hue and cry, on a mountain side!

Sometimes, we must concede, Bach's inclination to pictorial illustration involves him in contradictions, even in absurdities. For, particular words summoned so stereotyped an image to his mind that he reacted to them automatically. Thus he frequently stresses the literal meaning of a word used in a figurative sense. For example, in the title "High-priest" the adjective signi-

fies, of course, "chief" or "principal," as Bach was well aware. But he invariably interprets it literally by placing it on an upper note in the singer's register. Indeed, in Cantata 130 (*Herr Gott, dich loben alle wir*), where the text speaks of the angels' "lofty" intelligence, Bach even makes the Alto voice leap up a sixth. Sometimes his stress of a word contradicts its context. The opening Chorus of Cantata 66 (*Erfreut euch, ihr Herzen*) may be instanced. It is a joyful Easter anthem which invites the faithful to banish sorrow, mourning, complaining. But these are words of dismal emotion, and therefore Bach employs chromatic motives to represent them. In Cantata 70 (*Wachet, betet*), whose text bids the Christian not to "quail," Bach picks out that word for exposition, though the context invites courage and confidence. Again, Cantata 93 (*Wer nur den lieben Gott*) declares the happy lot of the man whom God protects. "He hath not built upon the *sand*," declares the text. The word apart from its context arrests him, and Bach incongruously depicts the *fall* of a structure resting on that unstable foundation. In the Ascension Cantata (No. 11) we meet another example of his irrelevance. The text speaks of the disciples returning, that is *de-*

scending, from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. But to Bach the word "mount" indicated height, elevation. So the disciples actually *de*scend the hill on an *as*cending passage!

Bach's inclination to this sort of word-painting was not peculiar to himself or, indeed, to his generation. But in him it was controlled by a piety as simple as it was profound. Forty years, month by month, as he sat down to write his Cantatas, he never failed to head his manuscript with the simple prayer "Jesu, help me" (*Jesu juva*) or to end it with the ascription "To God alone be the praise." For, though he conceded a sphere for secular music, he held it of inferior dignity, almost an abuse of music's fundamental function, the voicing of humanity's homage to its Creator. Admittedly, the black gowned Cantor, no less than his reverend colleagues, was a server in God's sanctuary. But Bach's piety was not the conventional deportment of his office. The books in his library, his music, his treatment of his texts, all declare unmistakably that the spiritual life was his constant contemplation, and that, as one who knew him well declared, he was "a truly pious man."

The Cantatas, then, vividly re-

veal the devotionalism Bach professed and practised. It can be defined in a word as Pietistic or Mystic. The Cradle at Bethlehem and the Cross at Calvary were its most vivid visions. They inspired in him an intense, almost feminine, devotion to the personality of Jesus, whose sacred name in his texts never failed to draw from him a gesture of adoring affection. And, is there elsewhere, or in any other art, a more beautiful and intimate picture of the Saviour than the *St. Matthew Passion* discloses? But while Pietism touched Bach with its spirit and attracted him by its reliance on sentimental regeneration, and though his music and friendships reveal his affinity with its outlook, he was repelled by its Puritan opposition to what he deemed an essential of public worship. For it opposed the intrusion of music in the domain of the spiritual, and only admitted the Hymn-book to its approval. Hence, the artist in Bach rejected Pietism as a system, though his nature yearned for a warmer religion than official Lutheranism afforded. He was, in fact, neither wholly Pietist nor wholly Orthodox, but a mystic, like Luther himself.

Thus, apart from their musicianship, the Cantatas reveal Bach as a man

singularly pondering, emotional, and, above all, controlled by a religious sense as profound as it was simple. It is therefore a comedy of contradiction that, almost until our own generation, the sensitive humanity of this very human soul should have been obscured by a curtain of misapprehension, and that one who was romantic and emotional beyond the ordinary should have been misinterpreted as "an unintelligible arithmetician"! How shall we explain this density of observation? Other reasons can be suggested. But chiefly it is to be attributed to ignorance of Bach's idiom and language.

Bach's language, as the Cantatas display it, may be described as one of realistic symbolism. He employs melodic or rhythmic *formulae* which, when we have mastered his idiom, reveal his mood and meaning. He was not original in a method eminently German. But it came to its fullest maturity in him, and in his usage of it he displays remarkable consistency. It is developed to its fullest significance in the Cantatas, but is observed in almost the earliest of his compositions. For it was not the result of patient experiment. It meets us in the Organ Variations written as a boy at Lüneburg, in the first Cantata composed at Arnstadt, and

especially in the *Orgelbüchlein* planned at Weimar. The last-named is a pocket lexicon of Bach's language, to be studied closely by all who desire to interpret him. It is, indeed, the most precise, and also the most consistent musical language known to us. For, though Bach's maturer experience gave its alphabet manifold shadings and inflexions, the root-symbols themselves do not exceed some twenty-five or thirty in number. Some are directional, denoting ascent or descent, height or depth, width, distance, and so forth. The act of hastening or running, and, conversely, the idea of halting, rest, or fatigue are expressed by similarly indicative formulas. For example, such words as *long*, *remain*, *wait*, *hold*, *stand*, *endure*, and the relative ideas of *rest*, *peace*, *sleep*, *eternity*, are expressed by holding notes. The moods, again, are distinguished by themes diatonic or chromatic to express joy or sorrow. The idea of laughter is always illustrated, sometimes with incongruous realism, as in Cantata 31 (*Der Himmel lacht*). The notion of tumult, terror, and the forces of nature, the winds, waves, clouds, and thunder, all have appropriate symbols that never vary. Even Satan is so consistently etched that we can easily capture Bach's conception of him. He

sees him, not as Isaiah's Lucifer, the Day Star, the Son of the Morning, but as the guileful Serpent of *Genesis*, the Great Dragon of *Revelations*. Naturally, the picture of him is most vivid in the four Michaelmas Cantatas (Nos. 19, 50, 130, 149). Observe the writhing themes that define his hideous shape, the rolling gait of his gigantic frame. Even in Cantata 165, in which Jesus is likened to Moses' serpent in the wilderness, Bach's symbolism compels him to outline a diminutive sinuous worm. His rests and pauses, too, are eloquent, as in that last assertive crotchet of the great "Credo," or in the *Magnificat*, where the rich are brought to a halt, unsatisfied and hungry, at an empty bar!

Twenty-five years ago Albert Schweitzer, in a monograph long since superseded by his more familiar studies, insisted that the Cantatas are the text-book in which we best can realize Bach's genius and stature. Their range is so wide, their diversities are so numerous, they touch so many moods, that in themselves they form a gallery which exhaustively represents his art and exhibits his personality. They dissipate the illusion, not yet wholly removed, that he was a cold, mathematical precisian. They re-

veal him as one of the tenderest and most emotional of men, with a poet's soul and a painter's eye. As a musician they declare him a Master whose workmanship was perfect, his technical skill miraculous. Above all, they prove him a large-hearted, simple-minded Christian. To misquote Shakespeare:

> Age cannot wither him, nor custom stale
> His infinite variety.

His art rests beyond the vagaries of caprice or fashion, "four-square, without a flaw."*

* Sir Henry Hadow, *Music*, p. 126.

The Choral in Bach's Usage

IV.

IT has been truly said, that by whatever path we explore the music of the Middle Ages we are led inevitably to Bach. For, like some fabric of towering architecture, he displays the patient development, and withal the meridian splendour of the processes out of which he evolved. And perhaps his obstinate medievalism is in nothing else so apparent as in the fact that to him, as to the generations that begat him, music was primarily the apparatus of religion, in his own words, "a harmonious euphony to the glory of God." Even the simple finger exercises he wrote for his children were headed with the ascription "In nomine Jesu," to indicate that already, on the mere threshold of their art, they stood on holy ground. We view him, consequently, as the last heroic figure of the fervent Age of Faith, and in no aspect of his genius more clearly than in his Chorals. From his childhood he is rarely visible without the Hymn-book in his hand. Our earliest picture of him shows him clambering to the Organ seat in the great church at Eisenach to play simple exercises on its familiar tunes. At Lüneburg the extant ex-

amples of his skill reveal him unravelling the principles of Organ technique on the same model. At Arnstadt the most vivid impression of him is on a Sunday morning in the Bonifaciuskirche, with the congregation agape below, while their young organist aloft in the Organ gallery was lost in the ecstasy of extemporization on a hymn-tune. At Weimar his service ended surprisingly in a period of imprisonment, employed in planning a hymnal of Organ preludes! During his Cöthen years the occasion is most memorable when he astounded Reinken by his prelude on the tune *An Wasserflüssen Babylon*, and received the veteran's astonished praise: "I thought this art was dead, but I find it alive in you." At Leipzig, in the select library that filled his shelves no volume was so well-thumbed as Paul Wagner's ponderous Hymn-book. Its hymns were his daily comfort and companion. He was at work upon its melodies on his deathbed, and he passed to his Maker with the words of one of them in his heart, if not upon his lips:

> Before Thy throne, my God, I stand,
> Myself, my all, are in Thy hand.
> Turn to me Thine approving face,
> Nor from me now withhold Thy grace.

Grant that my end may worthy be,
And that I wake Thy face to see,
Thyself for evermore to know.
Amen, Amen. God grant it so!

I need not labour the thesis, therefore, that Bach and the Lutheran Hymn-book are inseparables. I am rather concerned to investigate an association which was due partly to his character, partly to historical circumstances, partly to the obligations of duty—three propositions which I must first establish.

The fact, I think, is not generally grasped, that by becoming a church Organist and Cantor Bach deserted the traditions of his direct ancestry. His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were members of civic guilds of musicians, and though their service did not exclude them from duty in church, their principal tasks were secular, and not exclusively musical. For instance, Bach's father, Johann Ambrosius, as Town-piper of Eisenach earned one-quarter of his salary for chiming the hours on the town-clock, and for raising an alarm when fire threatened the inflammable houses of the community. Bach was not attracted to such a career, though, had his father lived,

he might have adopted it. For already as a schoolboy he was serious beyond his years, and it was no sudden resolve that moved him, when little more than twenty, to dedicate his art to religion, in a career none of his immediate ancestry had followed. Nor did the piety that inspired his early resolve ever falter. Throughout his life religion was his staff and comfort. How vividly the Bible spoke to him is evident in the music with which he clothed its text. And of the Lutheran Hymn-book, that precious legacy of the Reformation, his exposition of it, even in his Organ preludes, is so intimate and penetrating that, though they lack words, we can, not infrequently, detect in the music the stanza that was in his heart and controlled his pen.

But Bach's affection for the Choral was not simply a personal inclination. It was in the blood of his people, a prop of their faith, as essential an adjunct of their devotional equipment as the Bible itself, and the gift of the same genius. Surely it is not insignificant that Luther gave Protestant Germany a Hymn-book thirty years before she acknowledged a Confession; that she sang vernacular hymns before she read a vernacular Bible! Luther's competence as a

musician may have been exaggerated, but that he was a supreme writer of hymns is not contested. They were, in his own words, the "beautiful ornament" of public worship, and there is truth, if exaggeration, in Coleridge's judgment, that the German Reformation owed as much to Luther's Hymns as to his Bible. They made an irresistible appeal and invited an expanding literature not elsewhere matched. Luther's *Achtliederbuch*, the first German Hymn-book, published in 1524, contained only eight hymns and four melodies. Before the end of the Reformation century upwards of 350 Hymn-books equipped with tunes had been published, while Paul Wagner's stupendous compilation, which Bach used at Leipzig, contained actually more than 5,000 hymns.

Of this generous literature Bach's knowledge was so wide that the hymns he used furnish a considerable and impressive anthology, so intimate that he could readily recall a particular stanza to express the emotion within him. There is, in fact, no more revealing indicator of that knowledge, and indeed of his character, than the Chorals of his two Passions, especially those of the *St. Matthew Passion*. They are not merely aptly chosen. They register

Bach's personal reaction to the unfolding tragedy. For it is not fortuitous that his choice so often falls upon stanzas written in the first person, and that they punctuate the most poignant situations. For instance: Christ foretells his impending betrayal. The anxious disciples ask falteringly, "Is it I?" Eagerly in the Choral that follows Bach makes his own remorseful confession:

> Yes, I!
> The torture that awaits Thee,
> The thongs that soon shall bind Thee,
> Myself should bear, I know full well.

Again, Peter asseverates his constancy: "Though I should die, yet will I not deny Thee." Instantly Bach records his own devoted vow:

> I too will stand beside Thee,
> Lord, bid me not depart.
> No, never I'll forsake Thee
> Till Thou'st endured death's smart.
> So, when Thou art o'ertaken
> By death's tremendous doom,
> Thou shalt not lie forsaken,
> But find in *me* Thy home.

The final scene is enacted, the last words of the dying Saviour have been

spoken, and the watchers, some in jest, others with awe, speculate on a sudden, miraculous intervention to release the Sufferer. Once more Bach's reaction is subjective:

> When life's last hour shall call me,
> Be present at my side.
> Let no dread fears appal me;
> Thy mercy, Lord, is wide.
> But when I too must perish,
> Prepare the path I go,
> And let Thy Cross and Anguish
> Assuage my deepest woe.

He seizes, you see, every opportunity to employ the first-person stanzas of his texts, and so communicates to his music an intensity of emotion, a poignancy of utterance, that are unique. There is, in truth, no other of the Great Composers of whom we feel so surely, as of Bach, that he is not simply a musician decorating a sacred theme, but a devout Christian professing his faith in terms of his art. Other grounds there are on which that conviction can be based, but none so indicative as the Chorals in his usage of them. Bismarck once confessed his curious, and not invariably sympathetic, reaction to music. But, after listening to a Prelude by Bach, he said that he interpreted it clearly

and positively as the "firm and joyful profession of [the composer's] *faith*."

I pass to my third point: To what extent was Bach's usage of the Choral imposed or controlled by the conditions of his office? Excepting the Motets and Passions, his vocal and instrumental Chorals were written, though not exclusively, for the so-called "Hauptgottesdienst," the principal service of the Lutheran liturgy, a lengthy ritual which lasted from seven in the morning till noon, or later.* The prolonged ceremonial was opened and punctuated by Organ voluntaries. For these the organist was not restricted to a "Choralvorspiel," *i.e.* a Prelude on a hymn-tune. But at some point he was expected to mark the ecclesiastical season by an appropriate piece of that character, particularly as the prelude to the principal, or *de tempore*, hymn, sung immediately before the Gospel. Bach designed the *Orgelbüchlein* for this purpose, and though it is not suggested that all his "Choralvorspiele" were written for similar usage, that, undoubtedly, was the employment to which they were chiefly put. In his Organ music he uses nearly eighty hymn-tunes, treated in almost twice as many Preludes, a number not

* Cf. *supra*, p. 56.

far short of his extant Cantatas. Simple and elaborate, short and long, they mark every season of the ecclesiastical year, as though he designed them to match his Cantatas in their complete adequacy for every occasion on which God's worship might require them.

The choral parts of the service were regular and invariable—a short introductory Latin Motet, the "Kyrie" and "Gloria" (which together formed the Lutheran "Mass"), a few hymns, and the Cantata. The Cantata was sung with full orchestral accompaniment before the sermon. As to the hymns, there prevails a mistaken idea that Bach wrote his four-part Chorals for this particular purpose. That is not the case. Not only the melodies, but also the harmonic settings in Leipzig use were selected from published manuals. Particularly authoritative was that of Vopelius, and Bach's Scores furnish two positive proofs of his submission to it. In Cantata 27, composed in 1731, he introduces Rosenmüller's *Welt ade, ich bin dein müde* exactly as Vopelius had harmonized it fifty years earlier. The "Sanctus" of the B minor Mass affords the other example. Being in six vocal parts, it has been suggested that Bach had in mind the six-winged Seraphim of Isaiah's Vision.

The true reason, I think, is revealed in Vopelius, where we discover that at Leipzig it was customary to sing, not only the festival "Sanctus," but also the festival Responses in six-part harmony. Bach evidently conformed with that tradition in his single festal setting of the "Sanctus" that has come down to us.

It follows that we must look chiefly to the Cantata for Bach's vocal Chorals; and the association accords with historical usage. For this fund of religious folksong was so bound up with the religious experience of the German people* that, when the Cantata appeared, the Choral attached itself to it inevitably and without challenge. Bach's predecessors, Knüpfer, Schelle, Kuhnau, consistently maintained the association. Bach too followed the tradition, but in collaboration with a libretto unfamiliar to them and more fitted to what he called "the present-day *status musices*."†

Bach's Cantata librettos were infrequently drawn from published sources; their regular provision was therefore among his major anxieties. The fact is important; for his unremitting necessities undoubtedly inclined him to make trial of, and eventually adopt, a libretto whose association with the

* Cf. *supra*, p. 29. † Cf. *supra*, p. 31.

Choral is particularly intimate. It was in 1724, for the first Easter Cantata (No. 4) composed at Leipzig, that he first used the complete and unaltered text of a congregational hymn (*Christ lag in Todesbanden*). After a considerable interval he repeated the experiment in 1731, in another Easter Cantata (No. 112). But the rigid hymn metre proved inconvenient and impeding, particularly in the Arias and Recitatives, which demanded elasticity and freedom. Therefore by various devices Bach and his principal librettist, Picander, sought to remedy this defect, and after 1735 arrived at, and thereafter remained constant to, a uniform design. For in the last period of his activity, of nearly forty Cantatas composed on the text of a congregational hymn, only two retain its original stanzas throughout. In all the rest the first and last stanzas of the hymn begin and end the Cantata, and are associated in each case with the hymn's melody, while the intervening movements, Arias and Recitatives, are paraphrases of the intervening and corresponding hymn stanzas. The paraphrases do not at all resemble the metrical Bible passages familiar in Scottish Presbyterian usage. They treat the hymn very freely, being less concerned to restate its text

in metrical form than to enlarge upon the ideas it suggests.

Thus, Bach's Cantatas fall into two categories, identical in their musical texture, but distinguished by their texts. We may classify them as (a) the *Choral Cantata*, and (b) the *Free Cantata*. The first has for its libretto either the original text or a paraphrased version of a congregational hymn. If paraphrased, its first and last movements invariably are set to the first and last stanzas of the hymn in their original form, and also are unfailingly associated with the hymn's melody. Indeed, Bach's care to associate the two was so meticulous, that even if but a line of the original text was retained in a paraphrased stanza, he incorporated the melody of that line with it in his music. We are able to realize, therefore, that the Choral Cantata vividly and particularly appealed to a congregation to whom both hymn and melody were so familiar that the Cantata became an act of praise in which they could, even if indirectly, themselves participate.

The Free Cantata is distinguished from the other by the fact that a congregational hymn and its melody are not essential to its structure. Admittedly there are few of Bach's Free Cantatas from which a

Choral is absent. But they are merely details in a libretto of which a hymn is not the core. As in the Passions, their use is commentatory, devotional, but not structural.

Bach's ripest experience certainly preferred the Choral Cantata to the Free type, and in great measure his preference was based on affection for Lutheran hymnody. But other considerations may have moved him. For undoubtedly the Cantata, with its florid Arias and dramatic Recitatives, was disliked by conservative stalwarts, who resented its trespass into the more reticent ritual of public worship. And it must be remembered that such settings of the Cantata and Passion as Bach wrote had been introduced to Leipzig only shortly before he became Cantor; his *Johannespassion* actually was the second that was heard there. Six years later (1729), when he produced his *Matthaüspassion*, its performance was marked by a significant incident. "Some high officials and well-born ladies," a contemporary records, "began to sing the first Choral with great devotion from their books. But, as the theatrical music continued, they were thrown into the greatest wonderment, saying to each other, 'Pray, what does it mean?' While one of them, a widow, exclaimed:

'Heaven, help us! it might be an Opera!' " To some extent the prejudice survives. The Cantata is no longer sung at Leipzig before the sermon, as in Bach's experience, but as a voluntary before the morning service, of which, in a sense, it is no longer part. Performed, as it is, with full orchestral accompaniment, it is not difficult to imagine oneself in the Concert Room, an impression deepened by the fact that at its conclusion the players pack their instruments and disappear from the Gallery before the service begins. I gathered that this change was comparatively recent. But it helped me to realize that if the Cantata was generally regarded by Bach's congregation as an interval of relaxation in an intolerably long service, it was held by some an indecent intrusion, and therefore that his preference for the Choral Cantata, whose libretto had the authority of the Hymn-book, was to some extent due to the wish to meet the prejudices of his public.

The Choral, then, may be defined as a hymn-stanza sung to its own melody. In Bach's usage it is common to both types of Cantata, and in both he seems to have set himself to discover every musical means by which it might serve a devotional purpose. We distinguish, actually, in his

vocal Scores, seven types of movement, each a Choral in terms of our definition, but differentiated by his treatment of the melody. To specify them concisely: The Cantatas contain massive Choruses in which the melody is treated with every contrapuntal device, after the model of the Organ "Choralvorspiel." They display miraculous ingenuity, astounding skill; we could repeat of almost all of them what an instructed writer recently said of one, that "it is the most wonderful thing ever accomplished with a hymn-tune." And yet the artistry is so controlled, that the composer's devotional purpose is never dominated, confused, or diverted. Again, Bach gives us what are conveniently named "Extended Chorals," simple four-part settings of the melody in which the custom of improvisation between the verses—which still holds in Germany—is extended to the *lines* of each stanza, so that each is isolated from its neighbours by interludes, usually, but not invariably, orchestral. Again, there is the "Unison Choral," in which one or more voices sing the melody to a free orchestral accompaniment. Less frequent are the movements Bach styles "Aria," in which the Choral melody is woven into the texture of the movement by various de-

vices. More curious, and on the whole least satisfying, is the "Dialogue Choral." It resembles a conversation between two voices, one of which sings the words and melody of the hymn, while the other carries on a commentatory Recitative.

But beyond all these in number, and in the affection with which we regard them, are the simple, hymn-like, four-part Chorals which are particularly in our minds as "Bach's Chorals." The Cantatas contain in round figures 180 of them, and a larger number have survived from other sources. Nothing like them had ever been written; nothing comparable has been written since; nothing like them can be written again: For they represent a conjunction of epochs providentially associated in the genius of a single man. Even Bach's own generation, otherwise insensitive, recognized them as masterpieces. "Every instructed user will place them in that category," his son wrote fifteen years after Bach's death, "whether he observes the easy and melodic progression of their inner parts, or their Basses." But it is not their technique, nor the marvel of their melodic part-writing, that chiefly arrests us. They are, above every other distinguishing characteristic, an expression of religious devotional-

ism, the outpouring of a nature deeply and singularly moved by the words it employed. Handel was not attracted to this treasure-store of sacred folksong; but for Bach it was the staff of his life, the rock-foundation of his art, the incense of his devoted homage to his Creator.

Hence, Bach's Chorals do not merely harmonize a melody; they interpret the text. We have, in fact, authoritative indication that nothing less was his purpose. "Herr Capellmeister Bach taught me," records one of his Weimar pupils, "not to regard the tune alone as important, but to interpret the words through the melody." How sensitive Bach was to the words is evident in a fact that needs to be emphasized—he never repeated a setting. The Hymn-books of his generation, as of ours, were satisfied to provide one general harmonic treatment for the whole hymn. Bach sets each stanza. For instance, he wrote no less than ten settings of *O Welt, ich muss dich lassen;* seven of Neumark's *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten;* six of Schop's *Werde munter, mein Gemüthe;* seven of Hammerschmidt's *Meinen Jesum lass ich nicht;* seven of Crüger's *Jesu, meine Freude;* and so forth. In fact, as we study these gems of harmony, it is abun-

dantly clear that every time Bach approached their melodies some new apprehension of their beauty, or fresh thought summoned by the stanza before him, moved him to lay a new ground-plan of harmony. Hence, amazed, as we are, at his inexhaustible technique, we are even more so by the penetration and range of his sensitive thought. Indeed, so reactive was he to his text, so fastidious in his exposition of it, that in the whole range of his Cantatas, Oratorios, Passions, and Motets, which contain more than two hundred four-part Chorals, we discover only two instances of duplication, both of which were deliberate. To instance them: In the *St. Matthew Passion* Bach uses the same harmonization of Hassler's melody for different stanzas of that hymn, but in different keys, and with calculated effect. In the Whitsun Cantatas Nos. 59 and 175 he employs the same setting for Luther's *Komm, heiliger Geist*, an archaic melody and text, however, which invited little variation of treatment. There is, indeed, nothing so indicative of Bach's habitual pondering of his texts as the meticulous care with which he considered afresh even the familiar words of familiar hymns every time he employed them.

Bach's reverent regard for this fund of vernacular hymnody is illustrated by another indicative fact: In his concerted music, with three exceptions, he never associates the words of a congregational hymn with an original melody of his own. All three exceptions are found in the *Christmas Oratorio*, and for an evident reason. That work consists of six separate Cantatas, on each of which Bach was at pains to impress unity by linking their first and last movements. For instance, the Pastoral Symphony which begins Part II is woven into the accompaniment of the Choral that ends it. To the same purpose, the concluding Choral of Part IV is derived from its opening movement. Two short Arioso movements in that Part have the same source and intention. Nowhere else do we find Bach disrupting a familiar union of text and melody hallowed in his eyes by tradition and usage.

That Bach expended his ripest skill on the Chorals requires no laboured emphasis. That for him they represented the emotional climax of the work into which he introduced them we can be sure. And yet they appear to have been performed in conditions which obscured, perhaps obliterated, their sensitive beauty. They were not sung *a*

cappella. They were accompanied by rather coarse-toned wind instruments. And, so far as we can judge, their delicate balance was destroyed by the prominence deliberately conceded to the melody. Out of more than two hundred Cantatas there are, in round numbers, only thirty which do not conclude with a simple Choral. That the congregation took part in singing them seems established by evidence conclusive and affirmative. Referring to the institution of the New Style Passion in 1721, a contemporary tells us that Chorals were inserted in it in order that the whole congregation might join in. There is no reason why the practice should have been restricted to the Good Friday music, and we may deduce that the congregation was afforded a similar opportunity in the weekly Cantatas. But the strongest evidence that the Chorals were not sung to a silent audience is afforded by Bach's Scores. For instance, in the concluding Choral of Cantata No. 10 the melody is supported by a Trumpet, two Oboes, and the First Violins. Nothing else than an intention to lead the congregational voice can explain this orchestral prominence. But, whatever the blemishes of performance, Bach was never deterred from clothing the Choral in the utmost finery his skill af-

forded. Among the Cantata Chorals only one does not bear his own harmonies. For his sensitive conscience admitted no relief from the obligation to give of his own and of his best.

Let me make two observations before we listen to the Chorals themselves. In the first place, we cannot experience the full flavour of these devotional songs divorced from their ritual context. In the second place, the range of selection is bewilderingly wide. For Bach's Chorals form a library of unsurpassable richness. Drawn from his Cantatas, extant and lost, Passions, Oratorios, Motets, and isolated settings, they form a complete Hymn-book,* an eclectic anthology of Lutheran hymnody over a span of centuries. It serves every season of the Christian year, its Feasts, Fasts, Sacraments. Its range is extraordinary. It reproduces the poetry of more than 150 writers expressed in over three hundred hymns. It no less lavishly illustrates the development of German melody. Nearly three hundred tunes are in it, harmonized in some five hundred settings. Even if we eliminate Bach from it, it is a

* The reader is referred to *Bach's Four-part Chorals*, a complete compendium of his genius in this form (Oxford University Press).

volume of historical importance. But, associated with his sublime genius, his anthology becomes the most intimately precious of his gifts to posterity.

The swiftest glance through Bach's Hymn-book reveals the range of its selection, the wealth of its materials. Though the German Reformation possessed in Luther a master of vigorous verse and a man of instructed musical feeling, it drew also upon an ancient fund of which Luther made grateful use. Besides the original texts and tunes he and his associates provided, it borrowed from the medieval Church, submitted medieval vernacular hymns to a process of "Verbesserung," and even adapted folksongs of secular origin. All three categories are in Bach's Hymn-book, and indeed display his genius as a harmonist in its most brilliant colours.* Luther naturally is prominent in it—five of his melodies and thirty of his hymns are included, rugged and irregular in their metrical structure, but so direct and incisive that they became the most efficient auxiliaries of the reformed faith. Nor does Bach's anthology omit Luther's "house-choir," as he termed his associates,

* The Chorals selected to illustrate these and other categories are indicated at the end of this article.

nor other contemporaries who stood outside that inner circle.

After Luther's death (1546) hymns and melodies multiplied. Before the century ended more than two hundred and fifty Hymn-books equipped with melodies had appeared, whose contents are represented in Bach's by some fifty masculine tunes. But the seventeenth century sounded another note. For the Thirty Years War inflicted on Germany a prolonged agony whose gloomy despair found utterance in a new type of hymn, subjective, plaintive, intimate. In keeping with it the sturdy tunes of Luther's century were displaced by melodies of tender, feminine beauty which fitted the new texts. A major part of Bach's Hymn-book is drawn from this period, whose "Jesus-Lieder" were very precious to him, none more so than those in which Johann Franck and Johann Crüger collaborated in such exquisite hymns as *Jesu, meine Freude*, and *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele*. The former was very dear to Bach—there are seven settings of it in his Book. Of the other there is only one; but one may say of it what Schumann remarked of Bach's Prelude on its melody: "Such blissfulness is exhaled from

it, that if life were bereft of hope and faith, this Choral would restore them."

From the seventeenth century "Jesus-Lieder" to Bach's own contributions as a melodist to his Book is an easy transition. For his early manhood was coincident with the Pietist reaction against the cold formalism of official Lutheranism. At Mühlhausen he was involved in the wordy warfare of the two schools, and though his stubborn orthodoxy held him apart from its creed, he was strongly attracted by the warmth and emotionalism of the Pietist character. Schemelli's *Gesangbuch*, of which he was the musical editor (1736), was a Pietist manual, and to it he contributed more than twenty original melodies, several of which are in his Book. They are aloof from the early Lutheran idiom, and if they cannot be said to be wholly uncongregational, generally lack the qualities of an effective congregational hymn. Their inclusion in his Book completes his exposition of the Choral's prolonged history.

But the Book is more than an anthology. As we turn its pages it is Bach himself whom it most clearly reveals; for it so positively declares his preferences and the

thoughts that were most often in his devout mind. Indeed, if in form we must rank the Chorals among his minor works, in significance they stand among his greatest. For, to a degree nothing else he wrote surpasses, they are his "Credo."

Illustrations

(a) The hymnody of the Medieval Church:
   1. *Christum wir sollen loben schon* (No. 47*).
   2. *Christus ist erstanden* (No. 53).

(b) Popular hymns and melodies:
   3. *In dulci iubilo* (No. 196).
   4. *Herr Christ, der einig Gott's Sohn* (No. 132).

(c) Luther's hymns:
   5. *Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein* (No. 268).
   6. *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* (Nos. 77 and 78).
   7. *Vom Himmel hoch* (No. 335).

(d) Luther's contemporaries:
   8. *An Wasserflüssen Babylon* (No. 24).

(e) The end of the Reformation Century:
   9. *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (No. 392).

(f) The Seventeenth Century:
   10. *Jesu, meine Freude* (No. 208).
   11. *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* (No. 314).

(g) Bach's original melodies:
   12. *Komm, süsser Tod* (No. 452).
   13. *Jesu, Jesu, du bist mein* (No. 204).

* The numerals indicate the number of the Choral in *Bach's Four-part Chorals.*

A Genealogical Problem

V.

THE patronymic Bach is current still in Germany. Riemann's *Musik Lexikon* (eleventh edition 1929) names seven musician Bachs surviving or recently deceased. England funishes others: for the clan has a long English tradition. On 17 September 1636 Thomas Bach married Elizabeth Winter dwelling in the precincts of St. Martin le Grand, London.* On 19 April 1642 Mary Bach was reported as a recusant† by a county jury of assize. On 12 February 1709 the marriage of Elizabeth Bach, a parishioner of St. Martin's in the Fields, is recorded.‡ On 16 June 1776 Sally Bach, almost a contemporary of Sebastian, residing auspiciously in Love Lane, Eastcheap, was led to the altar by Charles Tenison, of Hill Hall, Surrey.§ A cousin of Sebastian's first wife, Johann Christoph Bach (b. 29 August 1676), taught the Clavier in England.

* Foster, *London Marriage Licences*, p. 59.

† *Historical MSS. Comm.*, Report on Various Collections, Vol. I, 314, 319.

‡ Foster, *Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, Supplement*, p. xiii.

§ *Gentleman's Magazine*, XLVI, 286.

It is not surprising that survivors of the name should claim descent from Sebastian Bach, while the lack of a definitive pedigree hitherto has made their refutation difficult, indeed impossible. Not long ago an English concert programme offered pianoforte solos by "Miss —— Bach, a descendant of the great Sebastian Bach," and there lives in a Swiss valley a young musician who makes a similar claim, and bears, moreover, the full name of his supposititious ancestor—Johann Sebastian Bach! Probably others, perhaps not a few, as confidently boast so illustrious a descent. It is therefore opportune to investigate the problem, the more confidently because, after prolonged search in German church registers, I have lighted on evidence which enables me at length to construct a complete and definitive table of Bach's lineage, and so to answer decisively in the negative the frequent, and till now unanswered, question—"Has Bach surviving descendants?"

Between Bach's death in 1750 and that of his last descendant in 1871 one hundred and twenty-one years elapsed. In that period Bach's lineage grew to number precisely fifty-two persons—his 20 children, 17 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren,

and 1 great-great-grandchild. But, for the purpose of this investigation, attention can be confined to a single member of his family —Johann Christoph Friedrich, Bach's sixteenth child, his youngest-but-one son, "the Bückeburg Bach." For the lineage of the fifteen elder brothers and sisters was extinct after 8 July 1818, while the four youngest brothers and sisters were deceased without issue after 14 December 1809. Thus, other than Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach's family, not a single descendant of Sebastian was surviving after 8 July 1818.

Johann Christoph Friedrich, Concertmeister at the petty Court of Bückeburg, died there, the last survivor of his father's sons, on 26 January 1795 and was buried in the Jetenburg churchyard on the last day of the month. He was survived by his widow Lucia Elisabetha Münchausen, whom he had married in the Stadtkirche at Bückeburg on 8 January 1755, when he was barely twenty-three—he was born 21 June 1732—and she (baptized 25* January 1732) a few months his senior. Her father, Ludolff Andreas Münchausen, a member of

* Their common gravestone dates her birth 26 Jan. 1732.

the Bückeburg Hofcapelle, died 6 June 1778. She herself had been trained to become one of the Court singers by Pietro Paolo Serini, of Cremona, a member of the Capelle. She died at Bückeburg on 1 October 1803 and was laid to rest by her husband's side in the Jetenburg churchyard.

To Johann Christoph Friedrich and his wife Lucia were born eight children —3 sons and 5 daughters. The last survivor of them, Christina Luise, the third child, died at a great age on 1 October 1852, a significant event bearing closely on the problem of the survival of Sebastian's direct lineage. Of her brothers and sisters only two had issue—Anna Philippina Friederica (b. 7 October 1755), the eldest child, and Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst (b. 24 May 1759), the eldest son. Anna Philippina, on 29 October 1776, at Bückeburg, married Wilhelm Ernst Colson, lieutenant of artillery,* and died on 23 August 1804, having borne her husband five sons and one daughter, all of whom, as will be shown, were deceased without surviving issue on 1 October 1852.

Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst Bach, eldest son of Johann Christoph Friedrich and Lucia Bach, was born at Bückeburg on

* Then stationed at Wilhelmsteinfeld, near Hagenburg.

24 May 1759. Educated by his uncle Johann Christian, "the English Bach," he was later in service at Minden, and thence, in his thirtieth (1789) year, was summoned to Berlin, where he held in succession the post of Concertmeister or Capellmeister to the queens of Friedrich Wilhelm II and Friedrich Wilhelm III. Here, on 21 January 1798, ten or twelve years before his retirement, in the Dorotheenstadtkirche of the new Berlin suburb he married Charlotte Philippina Henrietta Elerdt. He was in his thirty-ninth year, she a girl of seventeen (b. Dec. 1780), the eldest daughter of a Berlin "Friseur" (hairdresser). She briefly survived her marriage: on 29 November 1801 she died of scarlet fever and was buried on 2 December from the Jerusalemerkirche, being only twenty years and eleven months old. She had, however, given her husband two daughters—Carolina Augusta Wilhelmine, born 14 December 1800 and baptized in the Friedrichswerderkirche; and Juliane Friederica Ernestine, born 8 September 1801 and baptized in the Dorotheenstadtkirche; the latter died 28 October 1807, soon after her sixth birthday, and was buried in the Sophienkirchhof.

Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst's

mourning for his wife was not prolonged; the charge of his youthful daughter impelled him to seek another helpmeet. On 2 August 1802, in the Dorotheenstadtkirche, he married Wilhelmine Susanna Albrecht. Since her father, Nikolaus Albrecht, was formerly Kriegsrat and Postdirektor at Minden, it may be supposed that the acquaintanceship of the spouses was not recent. The bride, however, was considerably her husband's junior; she was twenty-eight years old and he past forty-three. Two children were born of the marriage—Augusta Wilhelmine, born 6 December 1805 and baptized in the Garnisonkirche; and Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig, born 10 November 1807 and baptized in the Georgenkirche; the latter died in infancy, on 26 August 1808, and was buried in the Sophienkirchhof. Thus, two daughters were the only surviving issue of Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst's two marriages.

The portrait of Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst hangs on the walls of the Sing-Akademie at Berlin. It reveals* a gentle, kindly face, a non-assertive personality. Indeed, after the death of Queen Luise in 1810, soon after the death of his youngest

* The portrait is figured in my *The Origin of the Family of Bach Musicians.*

child, Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst passed into a retirement at Berlin so scrupulously observed that not even Mendelssohn knew of his existence until he presented himself at Leipzig to attend the inauguration of the monument to his grandfather on 23 April 1843. He did not long survive that auspicious event, died at his residence, 113 Linienstrasse, Berlin, at 2.30 A.M. on Christmas Day 1845, and was buried four days later in the Sophienkirchhof.

Wilhelm Friedrich Ernst was survived by his widow, her stepdaughter, Carolina Augusta Wilhelmine, and her daughter, Augusta Wilhelmine. The sisters were now middle-aged, but the elder, on 30 June 1849, in the Petrikirche, married Ludwig Albrecht Hermann Ritter, who held a judicial office as "Königl. Kammergerichts-Assessor" at Neuruppin, a town some fifty miles north-west of Berlin. The bridegroom was the son of Wilhelm Ludwig Ritter, formerly Postmaster of Brandenburg-on-the-Havel. The bride was approaching her fiftieth year, and it is not surprising that the Neuruppin register records no issue of the marriage. The couple, however, did not long reside there. By October 1852 they had migrated to Eberswalde, some

thirty miles north-east of Berlin, where Ritter had been promoted to the office of "Kreisrichter" (District, or Circle, Judge).

The Ritters had not long settled at Eberswalde when the death of Frau Ritter's only surviving aunt, Christina Luise, led to legal proceedings of the first importance in the unravelling of Sebastian Bach's pedigree. Christina Luise died at Bückeburg on 1 October 1852 unmarried and intestate. Being the last of Johann Christoph Friedrich's children, her heirs needed to be sought in the next generation. Her demise had long been expected—she was ninety years old—and, immediately after her death, Frau Ritter and her half-sister Augusta Wilhelmine Bach, the one at Eberswalde, the other at Berlin, executed separate affidavits (10 and 12 October 1852 respectively) claiming their aunt's estate, seeing that no persons were known to them as nearly or more closely related to her than themselves. The validity of their claim fell to the jurisdiction of the Bückeburg Curia. To it, accordingly, on 20 October 1852 Carl Wilhelm Schöttelndreyer presented a power-of-attorney on behalf of the two sisters, along with an affidavit by Judge Ritter testifying that his wife and her sister alone had a claim on

the deceased's estate, seeing that they were her sole surviving relatives. The Curia therefore addressed itself to the two points on which it needed elucidation—the status of the applicants, and the truth of their contention that no other competent claimants survived. On 23 November 1852 Feldwebel (sergeant) Georg Weingarte deposed that the deceased Christina Luise had often spoken to him of her Berlin brother, now dead, and of his two daughters, other than whom he had no surviving children. Two days later (November 25) Schöttelndreyer attested that to his knowledge no other persons survived similarly or more nearly related to the deceased woman than her two nieces. The Curia was satisfied, and on 27 November 1852 Frau Ritter and her sister appeared in person to receive its confirmation of their inheritance.

It is of the highest significance that in these proceedings no plea was entered on behalf of the Colson family, whose members, if surviving, were as much entitled as the two applicants to the estate. The inference is obvious—the extinction of the Colson family was generally known in Bückeburg, where Schöttelndreyer's explicit statement—that Carolina Luise's *other brothers and sis-*

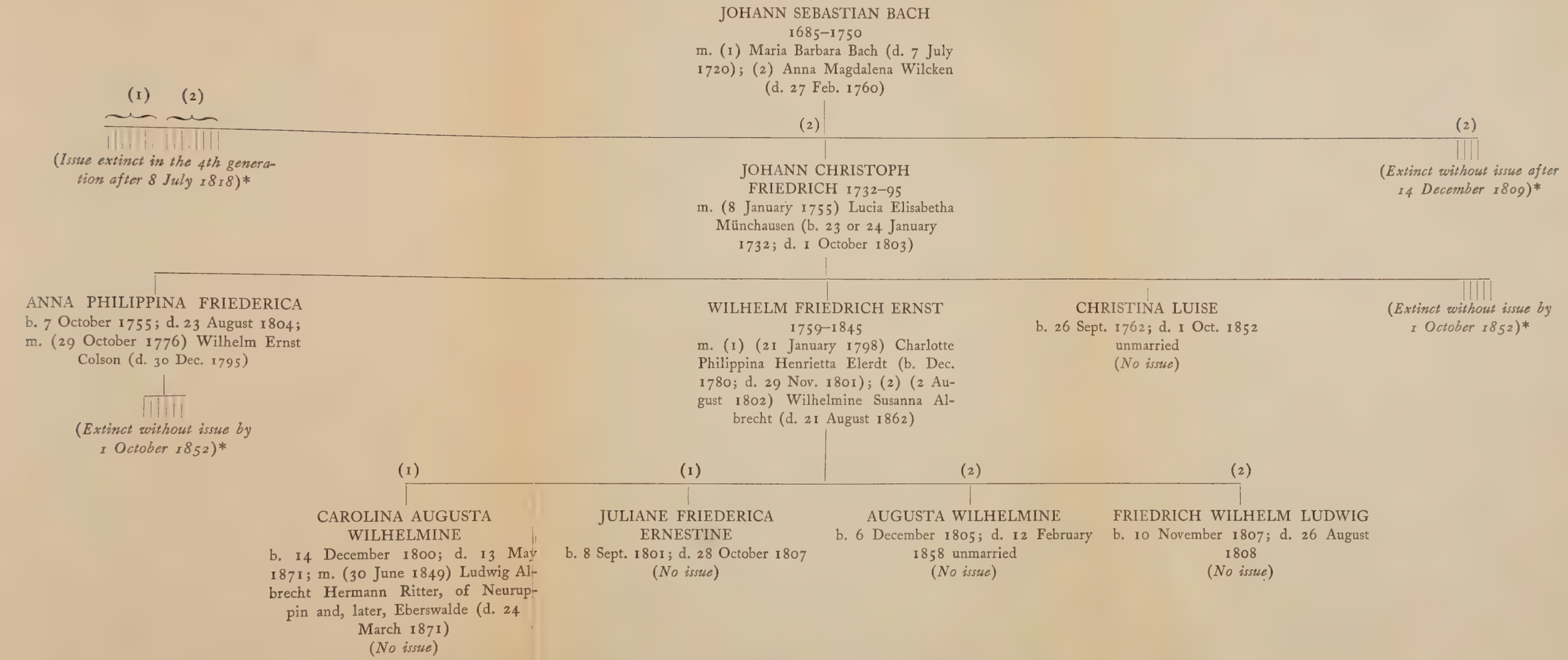
*ters were dead and without known issue**—* could have readily been challenged if its accuracy was not notorious.

It must therefore be concluded that on 1 October 1852 the only surviving descendants of Sebastian Bach were his great-granddaughters, Frau Ritter and Augusta Wilhelmine Bach. And so they remained. On 12 February 1858 the younger died unmarried while on a visit to her half-sister at Eberswalde. Her mother was still living in Berlin, whither her body was removed for burial four days later (February 16) in the Sophienkirchhof. Her death left her mother alone and untended. She was over eighty and senile, and was now removed to her stepdaughter's charge at Eberswalde, where she died of decrepitude on 21 August 1862 and was buried (August 23) in the churchyard there. The register declares her age as eighty-nine. By marriage she was Sebastian Bach's granddaughter, her death separated from his by a gap of 112 years! Only the Ritters survived to represent the family. The husband, now designated "Königl. Kreisgerichtsrat," was the first to pass. He died of fever at Eberswalde on 24

* "sind die Geschwister der Erblasserin verstorben, auch überhaupt keine Erben und deren Aufenthalt bekannt."

March 1871 and was buried (March 27) in the churchyard. The register gives his age as fifty-nine, the same as his wife's, who survived him only seven weeks. She died of jaundice on 13 May 1871, and was laid beside her husband in the cemetery three days later (May 16). The register records that she left no issue, and therefore her death brought Sebastian Bach's direct lineage to an end, snapping a genealogical chain whose links stretched unbroken over a span of more than 250 years. Since 13 May 1871 Bach's blood has ceased to flow in mortal veins.

A CONCISE TABLE OF BACH'S DESCENDANTS


JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
1685–1750
m. (1) Maria Barbara Bach (d. 7 July 1720); (2) Anna Magdalena Wilcken (d. 27 Feb. 1760)
(1)
(2)
(Issue extinct in the 4th generation after 8 July 1818)*
(2)
JOHANN CHRISTOPH FRIEDRICH 1732–95
m. (8 January 1755) Lucia Elisabetha Münchausen (b. 23 or 24 January 1732; d. 1 October 1803)
(2)
(Extinct without issue after 14 December 1809)*
ANNA PHILIPPINA FRIEDERICA
b. 7 October 1755; d. 23 August 1804; m. (29 October 1776) Wilhelm Ernst Colson (d. 30 Dec. 1795)
(Extinct without issue by 1 October 1852)*
WILHELM FRIEDRICH ERNST
1759–1845
m. (1) (21 January 1798) Charlotte Philippina Henrietta Elerdt (b. Dec. 1780; d. 29 Nov. 1801); (2) (2 August 1802) Wilhelmine Susanna Albrecht (d. 21 August 1862)
CHRISTINA LUISE
b. 26 Sept. 1762; d. 1 Oct. 1852 unmarried
(No issue)
(Extinct without issue by 1 October 1852)*
(1)
(1)
(2)
(2)
CAROLINA AUGUSTA WILHELMINE
b. 14 December 1800; d. 13 May 1871; m. (30 June 1849) Ludwig Albrecht Hermann Ritter, of Neuruppin and, later, Eberswalde (d. 24 March 1871)
(No issue)
JULIANE FRIEDERICA ERNESTINE
b. 8 Sept. 1801; d. 28 October 1807
(No issue)
AUGUSTA WILHELMINE
b. 6 December 1805; d. 12 February 1858 unmarried
(No issue)
FRIEDRICH WILHELM LUDWIG
b. 10 November 1807; d. 26 August 1808
(No issue)

* See the present writer's *The Origin of the Family of Bach Musicians*, Table VII, and the more recent and complete Stammtafel II in his *Bach: eine Biographie*.

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